THE

SERMONS

OF

BISHOP WILSON,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE

SERMONS

OF

BISHOP ATTERBURY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

SERMONS,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

THOMAS WILSON, D.D.

BISHOP OF SODOR AND MAN.

VOLUME I.

THE NINTH EDITION.

Though he be dead, he yet speaketh.

PRINTED BY (AND FOR)
RICHARD CRUTTWELL, ST. JAMES's-STREET, BATH;
AND SOLD BY
WILKIE AND ROBINSON, PATER-NOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

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CONTENTS

OF THE

FIRST VOLUME.

PRAYER used by the Bishop before his Sermons. PAGE 1

SERMON I.

The true Way of profiting by God's Word read or preached.

LUKE viii. 18. Take heed how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have — 5

SERMON II.

The same Subject continued — 25

SERMON III.

The same Subject continued — 41

SERMON IV.

The same Subject continued — 61

SERMON V.

The true Way of profiting by Sermons.

LUKE xi. 28. Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it — 81

SERMON VI.

The true Way of profiting by Publick Worship.

1 COR. xiv. 15. I will pray with the Understanding — 103

SERMON VII.

The Reason why People do not profit by Sermons.

HEB. iv. 2. The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with Faith in them that heard it — 125

SERMON VIII.

The Misery of not attending to the Word and Ministers of God.

PROV. v. 11, 12, 13. And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed; and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my Teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! —— —— —— 135

SERMON IX.

The Shame and Danger of being Christians without Christianity.

EZEKIEL xliii. 10. Thou Son of Man, shew the House to the House of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern —— — 155

SERMON X.

The same Subject continued —— — —— 175

SERMON XI.

Fear and Care necessary in our Way to Heaven.

1 PET. i. 17. Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear 193

SERMON XII.

The Characters of a Faithful Servant considered and applied for our direction and comfort.

MATT. xxv. 20, 21. He that had received five talents, came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord —— —— —— — 217

SERMON XIII.

True Repentance absolutely necessary to Salvation.

MATT. iii. 8, 9, 10. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire 235

SERMON XIV.

The great Bleſſing and the abſolute Neceſſity of a Redeemer.

LUKE ii. 10. Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people —— —— — 257

SERMON XV.

The Meaning and the Extent of the Salvation purchaſed by Jeſus Chriſt.

1 TIM. i. 15. This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners 269

SERMON XVI.

Diſpoſitions neceſſary to make Jeſus Chriſt and his Goſpel the greateſt of all Bleſſings.

MALACHI iv. 2. Unto you that fear my name, ſhall the Sun of righteouſneſs ariſe with healing in his wings —— 281

SERMON XVII.

The Duty of Chriſt's Miniſters, and the unhappy State of thoſe who hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs.

2 COR. v. 11. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we perſuade men —— —— —— — 297

SERMON XVIII.

The Deſign and Hiſtory of Chriſtianity.

1 TIM. i. 15. TIT. ii. 14, 1 TIM. iv. 1. Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners:—And gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Now the Spirit ſpeaketh expreſsly, that in the latter times ſome ſhall depart from the faith, giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits, and doctrines of devils; and [*Jude* 4] turning the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs — 315

SERMON XIX.

All Pleas and Excuſes for living in Ignorance and Sin made void by the Goſpel Diſpenſation.

JOHN xv. 22. But now they have no cloak for their ſin — 335

SERMON XX.

The Corruption of Human Nature, and the Neceſſity of a Redeemer.

ROMANS vii. 24, 25. O wretched Man that I am! who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?—Why; the grace of God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord —— — 353

SERMON XXI.

The Nature and Power of Evil Spirits; and the Neceſſity of a ſtedfaſt Faith in God's Protection.

MARK v. 13. And forthwith Jeſus gave them leave. And the unclean ſpirits went out and entered into the ſwine: and the herd ran violently down a ſteep place into the ſea, (they were about two thouſand) and were choaked in the ſea — — 373

SERMON XXII.

The Neceſſity, the great Bleſſing and Comfort of the Fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt.

ROMANS viii. 14. For as many as are led by the ſpirit of God, they are the SONS of God — — — 389

SERMON XXIII.

The Reaſon and the Extent of God's Love in ſending his Son into the World.

1 JOHN iv. 9. In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him — — 403

SERMON XXIV.

The Neceſſity of loving Jeſus Chriſt as our Saviour, Prince, and Lawgiver.

1 COR. xvi. 22. If any man love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha — — 423

SERMON XXV.

The Chriſtian's Armour.

EPHES. vi. 10—19. Finally, my Brethren, be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the Devil. For we wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to withſtand in the evil day, and having done all, to ſtand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with Truth, &c — 439

PRAYER

PRAYER before SERMON.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Maker of all things, Judge of all men, graciouſly receive the ſupplications and prayers of this congregation, or themſelves and for all eſtates and conditions of men.

Lord, in mercy, grant unto us, and unto all ſinners, a true ſenſe of our errors, and grace to amend whatever we have done amiſs, that iniquity may not be our ruin. Let not thoſe judgments fall upon us which our ſins have juſtly deſerved: and grant that thy great mercy and forbearance may oblige us to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

Have mercy upon the work of thy hands, that all the world may come to the knowledge of Thee, and of thy goodneſs in Jeſus Chriſt;—that all who are weary with the burthen of their ſins, may know where to find reſt unto their ſouls.

Preſerve thy church in the midſt of this uncertain world, and prepare her for what thy providence ſhall bring forth; that neither proſperity may corrupt thy faithful ſervants, nor adverſity diſcourage them from profeſſing the truth.

Keep this church and nation in the peaceable enjoyment of thy word and ſacraments; and grant

that we may all live anſwerable to the means of grace which thy providence hath afforded us.

Bleſs all the reformed churches; keep them from all wicked and dangerous errors; and bring into the way of truth all ſuch as have gone aſtray; that thy kingdom, and the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, may be glorified.

O God! whoſe kingdom ruleth over all, bleſs theſe nations to which we belong; that peace, and truth, and juſtice, that true religion and piety, may be ſecured and countenanced; that all ignorance and profaneneſs, and whatever elſe oppoſeth thy divine will made known to us, may be effectually diſcouraged.

To this end we pray God to hear us, for the King's Majeſty, that his days may be many, his government happy, his commands juſt and equal, and his people faithful and obedient:—for the Royal Family, that we may be bleſſed with a ſucceſſion of princes fearing God:—for all ſuch as are in council and authority, (and eſpecially for the high court of parliament) that they may conſult the honour of God, the true intereſt of his church, and the welfare of the people:—for the biſhops and paſtors of Chriſt's flock, that they may conſtantly ſpeak the truth, boldly rebuke and oppoſe vice, and be living examples of thoſe graces and virtues which they recommend to others: and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt be always with them according to his promiſe; and grant unto the people of their flocks, that they may profit by them daily.

Bleſſed

Bleſſed God and lover of ſouls, preſerve, by thy grace, thoſe that are in the way of life; enlighten the minds of the ignorant; awaken the conſciences of the careleſs; ſilence the gainſayers; convert the profane; and bring them all to thine everlaſting kingdom.

For the Iſle of Man.]—Bleſs the Lord and government of this iſle; continue to us the bleſſings of peace and unity, in church and ſtate, which we enjoy; preſerve us from all falſe doctrine and every falſe way, and root out all growing vices, that there may ever be in this place a generation fearing God and working righteouſneſs.

In time of War.]—Preſerve this land; and, in thy own good time, deliver all Chriſtian countries from the miſeries of war; ſcatter the people that delight in it; and grant that ſuch as fall, die not in their ſins unrepented of.

For City or Corporation.]—Bleſs the magiſtrates and government of ———, and the lawful induſtry of its inhabitants. Let brotherly love and charity increaſe amongſt them; and root out all growing evils.

Sea.]—Receive into thy Almighty and gracious protection the perſons and the ſhips of thoſe that are abſent; preſerve them from the dangers of the ſeas, from the violence of enemies, and from all ſad accidents; that they may return in ſafety to enjoy the fruits of their labours, and to praiſe the Lord for his mercies to them.

At a Funeral.]—Make us all mindful of our latter end, that death may never overtake us unawares; teach us, in the many ſpectacles of ſorrow, ſickneſs, and mortality, which we behold, to ſee how frail and how uncertain our condition is, that we may ſeriouſly apply our hearts unto that holy and heavenly wiſdom, whilſt we live here, which may in the end bring us to life everlaſting.

For Plenty.]—Viſit the earth and the ſeas with thy bleſſing; and open the hearts of thoſe upon whom thou ſhalt beſtow theſe favours, that they may do good and diſtribute: and give us all grace, that we may not be corrupted by thy bleſſings.

We commend unto the tender mercy of God, all ſick and dying perſons, all that are in affliction of mind or body, or under any preſſing calamity; all that are poor, and have none elſe to help them; and eſpecially all ſuch as ſuffer perſecution for a righteous cauſe.

Lord, pity and ſanctify the miſeries of this life, to the everlaſting benefit of all that ſuffer; that the tears of the oppreſſed, the pains of the afflicted, the wants of the poor, may all help forward and end in the ſalvation of their immortal ſouls.

We beſeech God to hear our prayers for all thoſe that never pray for themſelves; that they may ſee the danger, before it is too late, of living without God in the world.

And God Almighty grant, that we may all of us have worthy thoughts of his Majeſty,—for his great power in creating us,—for his wonderful providence in preſerving us,—for his great goodneſs in redeeming us by Jeſus Chriſt; for whoſe doctrine and example, and for the examples of all his faithful ſervants, we pray God make us truly thankful, and grant us grace ſo to follow their ſteps, that we may with them be made partakers of a bleſſed reſurrection.

That we may obtain theſe bleſſings, and whatever elſe is needful for us, let us all join, and with one heart and voice, pray to God in that perfect form of words which Jeſus Chriſt hath taught us:

Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.

SERMON I.

THE TRUE WAY OF PROFITING BY GOD's WORD READ OR PREACHED.

VOUCHSAFE, O God, to direct me in this work, and bleſs this diſcourſe for the good of my flock; that both I and they may glorify Thee for the truths they ſhall hear. Render them tractable and obedient to thy Word, and me faithful in delivering it; that I may ſave myſelf, and them that hear me, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake. Amen.

LUKE viii. 18.

TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR: FOR WHOSOEVER HATH TO HIM SHALL BE GIVEN; AND WHOSOEVER HATH NOT, FROM HIM SHALL BE TAKEN EVEN THAT WHICH HE SEEMETH TO HAVE.[a]

GOOD Chriſtian people; I am going to ſet before you the great bleſſing of attending to the Word of God, whether read or preached to you, and the true way of profiting thereby; as alſo the very great hazard you run, of living under the light of the goſpel, and the ordinances of God, and not being bettered by them.

There is nothing more certain, than that many Chriſtians are eternally ruined for want of conſidering the truths they hear every Lord's

[a] See Mark iv. 9. Heb. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4. James i. 21. 1 Theſſ. ii. 13; iv. 1.

day,

day, and by not laying them to heart. They come, indeed, to the church; and they hear the ſcriptures read to them; they hear what God commands, and what he requires of them; they are put in mind of what muſt certainly come hereafter, of *death*, of *judgment*, of *heaven*, and of *hell*; and yet they return home as little affected, as if theſe things were not true, or as if they did not at all concern them. And what is the conſequence of this? Why, they are called Chriſtians, *though they do not the things which Chriſt hath commanded them.* They hope for ſalvation without being converted; and under this deluſion they die, and go into eternity.

To prevent this deſtructive conſequence, our Lord has given this following ſtrict charge to all his followers: TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR. *Take heed*, for your ſalvation depends upon it, that you remember, and make good uſe of, what you hear: FOR WHOSOEVER HATH, that is, hath benefited by what he hath already heard, God will increaſe his knowledge and his graces: BUT WHOSOEVER HATH NOT, that is, thoſe who have not minded what they have heard, or have not profited by it; ſuch are unworthy of more favours, and by a juſt judgment of God, will be deprived of the knowledge and graces which they ſeemed to have.

Take heed, therefore, *how you hear*; that is, whether you come prepared to hear with a ſerious, teachable temper; with a purpoſe to learn your duty, and to practiſe what you hear,

Take heed how you hear:—And that you hear thoſe only who, by the order and providence of God, are appointed to inſtruct you. Never ſure was more need of this caution. "Many deceivers," ſaith the Apoſtle, "are entered into the world;" many lewd, profane, and anti-chriſtian books; many agents of Satan, and ſeducing ſpirits; and therefore beware and avoid them as you love your ſouls.

Laſtly; *Take heed how you hear.* Remember whoſe Miniſters you hear, whoſe *word*, whoſe *commands*, whoſe *promiſes*, whoſe *threatenings*, you hear. They are not the words of man, but the *word of God*, delivered by his own Son, confirmed by miracles, and reported to you by his own miniſters.

It may be, you may imagine that you know your duty as well as the preacher who is appointed to inſtruct you. Be it ſo. But remember, that whatever his talents and your's may be, *he is a miniſter of God to you for good*, if you hear and obey his godly admonitions. And remember too, that the moſt eloquent, learned man on earth cannot edify you without God's bleſſing. And laſtly, that God has made, and can make, his word, out of the mouth of the meaneſt of his miniſters, effectual for the converſion of thoſe that hear them with reverence.

Well then, whoever hopes to benefit by hearing, muſt come with humility, and a teachable temper of mind; muſt reſolve to receive inſtruction, reproof, and advice, as coming from God; and muſt ſtrive to remember what he hears.

It will ſtartle you, and I hope will affect your hearts, to hear the true reaſon why the generality of people do not profit by ſermons, and by the word of God read to them. It is not I, but Jeſus Chriſt, who tells you, that *the ſeed is the word of God*; that *thoſe by the way-ſide are they that hear. Then cometh the devil*, obſerve that, *then cometh the devil, and taketh the word out of their hearts, leſt they ſhould believe and be ſaved.*

You ſee who it is that tempts you to ſit down with indifference, when the word of God is read or ſpoken; who it is that ſuggeſts to your mind other matters, when you ſhould be attending to the things which concern your ſouls: you hear from Chriſt himſelf, that it is the devil, and that the end thereof is damnation. Let this dreadful truth, I beſeech you, oblige you at this time, and at all times, to hearken with attention to the word of God. And remember what our Lord ſaid to thoſe that heard his word, and would not mind it: "It ſhall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for you."

It behoves you therefore, as ever you hope to eſcape this dreadful judgment; it concerns you, I ſay, to come to church with a teachable temper, with a ſincere deſire, whether to learn, or to be put in mind of your duty. It concerns you to hear with an humble, attentive mind, and with a full purpoſe of heart to order your life accordingly; and then the word you hear will become indeed, what St. Paul calls it, *the word of ſalvation to every one that believeth.*

And

And that you may always attend to what is written in the goſpel with the greateſt regard and aſſurance of being true and certain, take notice of and remember what was declared by GOD himſelf in a voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him!*

It is not a poor, ignorant creature, as I am, who tells you *what you muſt do to be ſaved*—what you muſt do to eſcape eternal miſery; but it is the Son of God himſelf, ſent from heaven for this very end—to ſhew unto us the way to life everlaſting. It is him you hear, when you hear his word; and it is him you diſregard, when you mind not what is ſaid to you by his miniſters.

But then, becauſe it is not ſufficient for a man to hear the truths of the goſpel, unleſs through the grace of God he applies them to himſelf, and conſiders how much he himſelf is concerned in them, and that otherwiſe he will be little the better for hearing the word read or preached; I will therefore ſhew you how the moſt plain and unlearned Chriſtian may and ought to apply the things he hears every one to himſelf, and put them in practice. I will alſo ſhew you, how the truths you hear may always ſuggeſt to your minds ſuitable petitions, in order to obtain the grace of God, without which all you hear, all you know, will ſignify nothing towards your ſalvation.

For example:—Suppoſe the ſermon you heard was concerning THE DANGER OF INCONSIDERATION, or the ſad effect of that little

little care and concern which the generality of Chriſtians have for their ſalvation.

Such a ſerious ſubject, if you minded it, muſt needs affect you; and you will be apt to ſay within yourſelf, 'I ſee plainly, that if I paſs 'my days in a wretched, negligent manner, 'without taking care of my ſoul, without con-'ſidering what will come hereafter, whether I 'think of it or not, I can expect nothing when 'I die but miſery everlaſting. I ſee plainly, 'that I muſt not ſatisfy myſelf with the bare 'name of being a Chriſtian, without conſi-'dering what the Chriſtian religion requires of 'me. If I do ſo, I ſhall be dealt with worſe 'than a heathen. God himſelf has declared, 'that great will be the puniſhment of wicked 'men; and great the reward, great the hap-'pineſs, of ſuch as fear to offend him, of ſuch 'as are careful to obey his commands. And 'ſhall not this awaken me? Shall I go on and 'live as if no harm would follow? Will not 'inconſideration ruin me, as well as if I were 'guilty of the greateſt crimes? I take all poſ-'ſible care of my worldly concerns, and to 'avoid temporal evils; and ſhall I not be con-'cerned for evils that will laſt for ever? It is 'true I ſee others as little concerned as I am 'myſelf; but will this be any comfort to me 'if we are all miſerable at the laſt?

'I ſhould be aſtoniſhed to hear a man ſay, 'that *he does not believe one word of the Goſpel*; 'and yet it is plain, it will be the ſame thing 'in the end with thoſe that have not believed

'one

'one word of the goſpel, and with thoſe that
'have not laid the truths of the goſpel to heart.
'I am reſolved, therefore, what I will do: I
'will go home, and beg of God to touch my
'heart with a laſting ſenſe of the danger I
'am in; that he will give me great concern
'for my ſoul; and that he will not ſuffer me
'to lead a careleſs life any longer.'

And you will be confirmed in theſe good purpoſes, if you ſhall be ſo happy (for ſo the providence of God often orders matters for our good) if you ſhall be ſo happy, as in ſome other ſermon to be put in mind of *the wretched condition of one who leads a careleſs and a ſinful life*; and this both with reſpect to himſelf and to God.

If, for example, you have been plainly told, *what you cannot but know to be true*, that a perſon who leads a careleſs and a ſinful life, can never be truly eaſy, or pleaſed with himſelf;—that he is always doing that which he inwardly condemns;—that he is afraid of that light which would let him ſee the danger he is in;—and that though he has often purpoſed to lead a new life, yet he has as often neglected to do ſo.

If you have been told, *what is as true as the goſpel*, that while you live in wilful ſin, there is not the filthieſt creature ſo odious in your eyes, as you are in the eyes of God;—that you are governed by the devil, and are in his ſervice, and doing his work;—that every moment you put off your repentance, *you are deſpiſing the*

the goodneſs and long-ſuffering of God, who continues your life for no other end but that you may not be damned. If you hear, and are not ſtartled at this, *it is becauſe you are given over to a reprobate mind.*

Every man, who is not ſo given over, will certainly be afraid for himſelf; and if he hears a ſermon concerning REPENTANCE, and a ſinner's return to God, he will probably come to ſome ſuch reſolutions as theſe:

'I am convinced, from God's own Word, 'that a ſinner has no other choice but either '*repentance* or *damnation*. As long, therefore, 'as I have no hopes of pardon, I can have no 'comfort in life: and as long as I defer my 'repentance, I can have no hopes of pardon. 'And I ſee plainly, from what I have heard 'this day, that my repentance will ſignify very 'little, if I do not bring forth fruits anſwer-'able to amendment of life. Is it not a great 'mercy that God will accept of a ſinner's 'repentance, after he has done ſo many ill 'things? Is it not great condeſcenſion in the 'Son of God to give us even his oath, that *all 'ſins ſhall be forgiven unto the ſons of men*; and 'that none ought to deſpair of mercy, but 'ſuch only as will not be perſuaded to forſake 'their evil ways? What a mercy is it that I 'have time to repent, and to bring forth fruits 'meet for repentance? And what a fooliſh, 'what a wretched creature ſhould I be, if I 'ſhould neglect ſuch a mercy, and go on in 'my ſins, and to my deſtruction! I will

therefore,

'therefore, through the grace of God, not de-
'fer my repentance for one moment, leſt I be
'overtaken in ſin, and be for ever undone.'

Some ſuch (one would hope) would be the thoughts and the reſolutions of any one, who with attention had heard a ſermon concerning *the neceſſity of repentance and a new life.*

A Chriſtian that reaſons thus, and thus reſolves, and acts accordingly, *is in the way of ſalvation.* But that he may continue in that way, he will want to be often put in mind of the danger of backſliding; of the duties required of *him*, of *every man*, in that ſtate of life in which the providence of God has placed him; of the ſins he is chiefly to watch againſt, and of the means of grace which God has appointed to bring us to heaven.

For inſtance:—You will hear the DUTY OF PRAYER preſſed upon all Chriſtians, as neceſſary to their ſalvation as their daily bread is to preſerve their lives.

Will you return home without laying this to heart? You may indeed do ſo; but if you have any concern for your own ſoul, you will think better of it, and reaſon with yourſelf after ſome ſuch manner as this:—

'I now ſee the great ſin of neglecting ſo
'neceſſary a duty as is this of Prayer. I ſee
'plainly, that I muſt renounce all pretence to
'religion, all hopes of ſalvation, if I neglect
'it any longer. I am convinced, that all the
'ſins I ever committed, and which I have not
'confeſſed and begged pardon for, do ſtand in
'judgment

'judgment againſt me. And what will be-
'come of me if I die in this condition? And
'I have all the reaſon in the world to believe
'that God will withhold his bleſſings from
'me, if I do not give him thanks for thoſe I
'have already received. I have no reaſon to
'hope for God's protection and bleſſing upon
'myſelf, upon my children, or upon my la-
'bours, when I never pray for them. I am
'as ſubject to afflictions, to troubles, to cala-
'mities, as other people: how ſhall I bear
'them with patience without the aſſiſtance of
'God's grace? How ſhall I eſcape the many
'temptations to wickedneſs which I meet with
'daily, without praying for God's help and
'direction? In ſhort, if I neglect this duty,
'how ſhall I eſcape eternal miſery?

'I am reſolved what to do. I will, by the
'grace of Almighty God, omit this duty of
'prayer no longer, leſt I come ſhort of heaven,
'and be for ever undone. I will, as I have
'been inſtructed, take all occaſions of praying
'to God. When I ſet about any buſineſs of
'moment, I will pray him to proſper my ho-
'neſt endeavours. Whenever I ſhall perceive
'that I have done any thing amiſs, I will
'forthwith pray God to forgive me, and to
'give me grace to do ſo no more. If I am
'in trouble, or in diſtreſs, I will apply to the
'Father of mercies, and God of all comfort.
'If I am in any danger, I will pray him to
'deliver me. If I am tempted to any ſin, I
'will beſeech him to ſuccour me. And I will

'not

'not fail to give him thanks, whenever he 'beſtows any bleſſing upon me.

'By doing this I ſhall be entitled to the 'favour and protection of God, and be al-'ways afraid of offending him.

'But this is not all; for I am reſolved, by 'the grace of God, to pray with my family, 'and for my family, every day, as ever I ex-'pect God's bleſſing to be with them and my-'ſelf. By this means, I ſhall put them under 'God's protection every morning and evening; 'I ſhall ſet them a good example of piety; and 'this is the only way to make my children and 'ſervants *ſerious*, *holy*, *honeſt*, and *diligent*. 'And I will, by God's help, do this faithfully, 'though I ſhould be ſo unlearned as to be 'able to ſay no other prayer but the Lord's 'prayer: I will hope God will hear me ac-'cording to the full meaning of that prayer, 'if I ſay it devoutly upon my knees, and with 'my family.

'This will not hinder my worldly buſineſs; 'and I will truſt in God, that he will doubly 'pay me for the loſs of any time I ſpend in 'his ſervice.'

Every ſerious Chriſtian who wiſhes well to his own ſoul, will, I ſay, think and reſolve, when he has heard a ſermon concerning the Duty of Prayer, after ſome ſuch manner as this we have been ſpeaking of.

Let us again ſuppoſe, that the ſermon which you have heard has been concerning *the meaning, and benefit, and duty of receiving* THE LORD'S

LORD'S SUPPER. A ſerious perſon can hardly chooſe but make ſome ſuch obſervations and reſolutions as theſe:—

'I have this day been invited to partake of 'the Lord's Supper;—an ordinance appointed 'by Chriſt himſelf, and for this reaſon,— 'That Chriſtians being often called upon to 'remember the love of their dying Saviour, 'and the occaſion of his death, which was to 'make their peace with God, they might love 'him with all their heart, and remember to 'obſerve the commands he has given them, in 'order to fit them for heaven. I am aſſured 'that this is the only way to render our per-'ſons and our prayers acceptable to God; of 'obtaining the pardon of our ſins, the grace 'of God, and everlaſting life after death.

'I underſtand what duties are required to 'make me a worthy gueſt at that holy table. 'I muſt reſolve to forſake thoſe ſins which coſt 'Jeſus Chriſt his life: and I muſt forgive, and 'love, and do good to others, ſince he has been 'ſo good and ſo kind to me as to lay down his 'very life for me. I dare not therefore, I will 'not, turn my back upon an ordinance upon 'which my ſalvation depends. If I am not 'fit to go to this ſacrament, I am ſure that I 'am not in the way of life; I muſt be under 'God's diſpleaſure. I have nothing therefore 'to do, but what, through God's grace, I will 'endeavour to do: and this is, to prepare my-'ſelf as well as I am able; and for the reſt, to 'truſt in the mercy and goodneſs of my Sa-

'viour,

'viour, to ſupply by his grace what is want-
'ing on my part. And I ſhall eaſily know
'whether I have been a worthy communicant
'or not, by the life I lead afterwards.'

If at any time the miniſter of God is preſs-ing upon you *the neceſſity of* AN HOLY LIFE, of walking worthy of your Chriſtian name and calling, do not forget it as ſoon as you go out of the church, but think thus with yourſelf:—

'My puniſhment will ſurely be very great,
'if I, who call myſelf a Chriſtian, do lead a
'careleſs and an unchriſtian life. I ſee how
'blind thoſe people are, who hope to go to
'heaven without endeavouring to pleaſe God
'and to keep his commandments. I hope I
'ſhall never forget a truth I have heard this
'day, That Religion, and the way to pleaſe
'God, does not conſiſt ſo much in obſerving
'the outward duties of chriſtianity, as in lead-
'ing an holy life. I ſee plainly, that a man
'may go to the church, and to the ſacrament,
'without being juſt, or humble, or devout, or
'temperate, or charitable. And that the rea-
'ſon why we go to church, and pray to God,
'and hear his word, is this; that we may ob-
'tain his grace to enable us to lead a ſober, a
'righteous, and a godly life. This therefore,
'through the grace of God, ſhall be my great
'endeavour for the time to come, to walk
'worthy of the religion I profeſs, and of the
'hopes I have of being happy when I die.

'I have this day,' ſaith another, 'been put
'in mind of a truth which is too little conſi-

'dered by Chriſtians, and this is, *that this life 'is a ſtate of trial*; and that we ſhall be happy 'or miſerable, when we die, juſt as we have 'behaved ourſelves well or ill in this world. 'I ſee then that I may be happy, if it is not 'my own fault; and I ſee too, that I ſhall cer-'tainly be miſerable, if I am not careful to 'lead ſuch a life as may recommend me to 'the mercy and favour of God. In ſhort, I 'ſee plainly, that now is the time in which I 'am to chooſe what I am to be for ever and 'ever. I will therefore beg of God to keep 'this thought ever in my heart, and to enable 'me to make ſuch a choice as that I may be 'happy for ever.'

And you will be better diſpoſed to make ſuch a choice, if you have at any time attended to a ſermon on *the great advantage of being* RELIGIOUS. For then you will be convinced, that a firm reſolution to be governed, at all times, by the laws of God, is the only ſure way to have peace of mind here, and happineſs hereafter; foraſmuch as all the commands of God are good, and intended to keep us from ruining ourſelves, which we ſhould certainly do if we were left to our own choices: and that the ordinances of the Goſpel are neceſſary to reſtore us to the favour of God, and ſerve either to cure us of ſome ſad diſorder we labour under, or to communicate the divine graces, or to ſeal to us God's gracious pardon; to direct us in the way we ſhould go, or to keep us from backſliding.

And

And if to this you add what you can remember to have heard concerning THE REWARD OF SIN, and GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON SINNERS, you will have motives ſufficient to determine you what to do; that is, you will conclude, 'I have but one great buſineſs in 'this world, and that is, *to ſave my ſoul.* This 'is *that one thing needful* which our Saviour 'ſpeaks of. If I do not mind this, it is no 'matter what elſe I mind; *for he that loſes his 'ſoul, loſes more than the whole world.* This, 'by the grace of God, I will charge my me-'mory and my heart with as long as I live.'

Now, as ever you hope to do ſo, you muſt attend to another duty, which you will very often hear preſſed upon Chriſtians both in the holy ſcripture and in ſermons; and this is, *the duty of being always watchful, and upon your guard*; "becauſe our adverſary the devil, "like a roaring lion, walketh about, ſeeking "whom he may devour,"[b] finding them careleſs, or from under God's protection.

Upon hearing this, you will do well to make ſuch reflections as theſe:

'I ſee that we are beſet on all ſides with 'dangers and temptations to ſin. We are in 'danger from the corruption of our own na-'ture, which is prone to evil continually; we 'are in danger of ſetting our hearts upon this 'world, and of forgetting that this is not the 'world we were made for.

[b] 1 Pet. v. 8.

'Beſides theſe, Satan has his agents in every 'place, tempting us to ſin of one kind or 'other. Some to whoredom; ſome to drunk-'enneſs; ſome to ſwearing, curſing, lying, or 'ſlandering; others to fraud, injuſtice, or op-'preſſion: any one of which will ſhut me out 'of heaven, and ſend me to hell, if I am not 'careful to avoid them.

'What have I then to do? Why, as I 'hope for heaven and happineſs, I muſt be 'ſerious, and watch againſt all temptations 'to evil, and pray to God daily to keep me 'from ſin and wickedneſs of every kind. And 'this, by the grace of God, ſhall be the great 'buſineſs of my life.'

Whoever knows any thing of the Chriſtian religion muſt know, that SELF-DENIAL is a means of grace without which no man muſt hope to be ſaved. *If any man will come after me*, ſaith our Lord and Saviour, *let him deny himſelf.*[c] *If thy right-hand offend thee, cut it off*; that is, part with any thing, though as dear to you as a right-hand or a right eye, rather than offend God.

It was not the preacher only that ſaid this, but they are the words of Jeſus Chriſt himſelf; who ſaid beſides, that *it is better to go into life with one hand or one eye, than with two hands or two eyes to be caſt into hell, where the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched.*

It is hardly poſſible for any ſerious Chriſtian to hear this duty explained, and not to think

[c] Matth. xvi. 24.

of

of it even after he leaves the church, and to think thus with himſelf:---

'I ſee plainly, that I muſt reſolve to deny 'myſelf, to ſtand againſt all my corrupt in-'clinations, or be content to periſh eternally. 'Whatever evil ways or cuſtoms I have hi-'therto been fond of, I muſt renounce and 'forſake them, or I ſee what muſt follow. 'If an idle or a careleſs life have been my 'great ſin, though the world ſees no great 'harm in ſuch a life, yet I ſee I muſt reform, 'let it coſt me never ſo much pain and trou-'ble, or I ſhall infallibly, one day or other, 'hear that dreadful ſentence---*Bind the un-'profitable ſervant hand and foot, and caſt him 'into outer darkneſs.*

'If *riches* and the *love of the world* have hi-'therto poſſeſſed my heart, renounce them I 'muſt, let it be never ſo uneaſy to me, or my 'intereſt in heaven---for *God and mammon I 'cannot ſerve.* If any ſinful luſt or pleaſure 'have got the power over me, and though it 'is become a ſecond nature, yet I ſee plainly 'it muſt be renounced and forſaken, or I muſt 'never hope for heaven. If profane talk, if 'ſwearing, lying, or ſlandering, be the ſins 'that are become habitual to me, and that I 'cannot without great pains leave them off; 'yet this pains I muſt take, or ſuffer the pains 'of eternal death. If tipling, if ſquandering 'away my time or eſtate, if gluttony or drunk-'enneſs, have been the ſins I have lived in, 'theſe muſt be repented of, and utterly for-

'ſaken,

'ſaken, let it be never ſo uneaſy to fleſh 'and blood, or I ſhall have no part in the 'kingdom of heaven.

'In ſhort, I have been plainly told, and I 'plainly ſee, that men need not take pains to 'be ruined, ſince our own corrupt nature, if 'not denied, reſtrained, and kept under, will 'ruin us without remedy. I ſee too, that all 'the commands of God, all the duties which 'he has preſcribed to us, are all intended in 'mercy to keep us from ruining ourſelves: 'and that if we had been ſuffered to follow 'our own wills, or the evil cuſtoms we con-'tract, or the bad examples we meet with, we 'could not eſcape bringing upon ourſelves 'deſtruction. I am left, therefore, without 'excuſe, and I ſhall dearly pay for it, if I do 'not *deny myſelf* every thing which God has 'forbidden me; and if I do not look upon 'his commands as the only way to life and 'happineſs everlaſting.'

Thus every ſerious Chriſtian will argue with himſelf, whenever he hears any other duty of chriſtianity explained or recommended to his practice.

If time would permit, I would ſhew you how this might be done, to your great advantage, in many other inſtances of duty and religion.

All that I ſhall now add is, to put you in mind of what a bleſſing it is, that you have churches to go to, and that you can hear the word of God, and know his will, and what

you

you muſt do to be ſaved.——You ſee the great bleſſing of a STANDING MINISTRY, and how happy it is that there are perſons appointed by the Holy Ghoſt, who, *at the peril of their own ſouls*, are to read, and faithfully to explain, the truths of the goſpel to you.—You may indeed ſhut your ears, or careleſsly think of other matters. You may refuſe to hear with attention your duty, and the dangers you are liable to. You may return home without laying theſe things to heart; but then, be aſſured of it, you return home without God's bleſſing. You may refuſe to come to church, (as the manner of ſome is) and think yourſelves too good to be *taught*, *reproved*, or *put in mind* of your duty; but what will this end in? Why, you will in time forget God, his commands, and all that is good; you will come at laſt to ſay, with thoſe wicked people whom Job ſpeaks of,[d] who ſaid unto God, *Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

I need not tell you, that ſuch people are in the way of damnation.

I pray God keep all you from following their ſteps. And give us his grace, that we may *hear*, *underſtand*, *remember*, *conſider*, *love*, and *practiſe*, what is read and preached to us according to God's holy word and will, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord; to whom, with the Father, &c.

[d] Job xxi. 14.

SERMON

SERMON II.

THE TRUE WAY OF PROFITING BY SERMONS.

LUKE viii. 18.

TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR: FOR WHOSOEVER HATH, TO HIM SHALL BE GIVEN; AND WHOSOEVER HATH NOT, FROM HIM SHALL BE TAKEN EVEN THAT WHICH HE SEEMETH TO HAVE.[a]

WHEN our Lord bids us *take heed*, we may be very ſure it is concerning ſomething of great moment, and therefore to be ſeriouſly attended to. And we find it is ſo here. *Take heed*, ſaith he, *how ye hear:* your ſalvation depends upon your underſtanding and believing what you hear: *for whoſoever hath*; that is, whoſoever hath benefited by what he has already heard, God will increaſe his knowledge and his graces; *but whoſoever hath not*—have not minded what they have heard, or have not profited by it, ſuch careleſs people, by a juſt judgment of God, ſhall loſe that knowledge and thoſe graces which he had given them.

Take heed, therefore, that you hear the word of God with a ſerious mind—with a purpoſe

[a] See Matth. xiii. 9. Luke x. 24; xi. 28. John xv. 12. Heb. xii. 14.

and desire to learn your duty, and with a resolution to practise what you hear.

Lastly, *Take heed whom you hear:*—remember whose ministers you hear, whose word, whose commands, whose threatenings, whose promises, you hear. They are the ministers of God, *that watch for your souls.* They read and preach to you the *word* of God, delivered by his own Son. They explain to you the *commands* of God, which are designed to make you happy for ever. And they put you in remembrance of the *promises* of God, if you are obedient; and of his *severe threatenings*, if you despise his goodness. Remember, therefore, what the Son of God said to those that heard his word, and would not mind it:—*It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for such careless people.*

But having, in a former discourse upon these words, explained these things very particularly, I now proceed to shew you *the true way of profiting by Sermons*, many instances of which I gave you in my former discourse.

Let us suppose, then, that the Minister of God has at any time been explaining to you *the nature of a true Christian Faith; the necessity of believing whatever God has made known to men*; as also *the danger of not living as becomes people who profess to believe such things.*

If you have seriously attended to such a discourse, you will think thus with yourself:—

'I am now convinced, *that without faith it 'is impossible to please God.* I see plainly, that it

'it is not a matter of indifference, whether 'we believe or not, ſince Jeſus Chriſt himſelf 'has declared, *that he that believeth not ſhall be 'damned*; and that it is as abſolutely neceſſary 'to ſalvation that we believe—not what we 'pleaſe, but—*according to the faith once deli-'vered unto the ſaints.*

'Our Lord himſelf has told us, *That if we 'believe not in him, we ſhall die in our ſins.*[b] 'And again; *He that ſinneth againſt the Holy 'Ghoſt, ſhall never be forgiven.* So dreadful a 'thing it is not to know, or wilfully to miſ-'take the truth!

'Whatever, therefore, God has revealed, 'muſt be true and certain, though I cannot 'comprehend it. It is not neceſſary that we 'ſhould always know the reaſons of God's 'will and pleaſure; it is enough that we 'know it to be his will. It is ſufficient to me 'to know and believe, that God would have 'all men to be ſaved. That Jeſus Chriſt his 'Son has ſhewed unto us the way of ſalva-'tion. That he has reconciled us to God. 'That he will be our advocate with God for 'our pardon, if we truly repent us of our 'ſins. That God will afford us all manner 'of aſſiſtance by his Spirit, to overcome all 'the corruptions of our nature, and all the 'difficulties we ſhall meet with. That he 'will make us happy for ever, if we ſtrive to 'pleaſe him during this ſhort life: and that 'we ſhall be moſt miſerable when we die, if 'we die in our ſins unrepented of.

[b] John viii. 24.

'In

'In order to prevent this ſad doom, he has 'made known to us what are the things which 'we muſt do to be ſaved, and what we muſt 'avoid as ever we hope to eſcape the bitter 'pains of eternal death! He has alſo made 'known to us, that all things are naked and 'open unto his eyes, that we may live as hav-'ing him the conſtant witneſs of our words 'and actions. I muſt not therefore deceive 'myſelf, nor fancy, that if I ſhould be ſo un-'happy as not to believe, or not to mind theſe 'things, that therefore I have no reaſon to 'fear what will follow: for God's word will 'come to paſs, though all the world ſhould 'not mind it.

'I ſee, therefore, how neceſſary it is to have 'the articles of my Chriſtian faith in my me-'mory, and before my eyes continually; and 'to beg of God daily to increaſe my faith. I 'will read or hear God's word with reverence, 'and endeavour to lay up in my heart what I 'hear and underſtand. And, knowing that 'faith is the gift of God, I will not fail to aſk 'it of God with all the earneſtneſs of my 'ſoul; for I have been told, and do believe, 'that the moſt learned man on earth cannot 'convince or convert me, unleſs I attend to 'the word ſpoken, and ponder it in my heart, 'and beg of God to enlighten my mind.

'I will not be afraid to aſk myſelf this ſhort 'queſtion, *Do I live by faith?* that is, Does 'the fear of God hinder me from doing what 'I know will diſpleaſe him? Do the promiſes

'of

'of God affect my heart, and make me de-
'ſirous to be made worthy to obtain them?
'Do the judgments of God upon wicked peo-
'ple, which are recorded in the holy ſcrip-
'tures, make me take warning, and fear to
'draw down the like judgments upon myſelf?
'Have I a juſt value for the Chriſtian religion,
'and its ordinances and miniſters, and for
'whatever has any relation to God? Have I a
'love for the goſpel, and for the truths con-
'tained in it; and do I reſolve to govern my-
'ſelf according to them? Do I conſider what
'a dreadful thing it is for a Chriſtian ſo to
'live as if not one word of the goſpel were
'true? Do I hate ſin as moſt diſpleaſing to
'God, and hurtful to my own ſalvation? Do I
'diſtruſt myſelf and my own ſtrength, and put
'my whole truſt and confidence in God? Do
'I conſtantly pray for his grace to increaſe
'my faith, and that I may be able to live as
'becomes my profeſſion? If I do this in the
'ſincerity of my heart, then I may be aſſured
'that I live by faith; and that I have a prin-
'ciple of a new life, which, if I do not ſtifle
'it, will in the end bring me to everlaſting
'life and happineſs.'

Theſe, I ſay, will (through the bleſſing of God) be the fruits—theſe, or ſuch like, will be the obſervations and reſolutions, which a ſerious Chriſtian will make, who has carefully minded what has at any time been ſaid upon the ſubject of Faith.

Let

Let us, in the next place, ſuppoſe, that you have heard a ſermon concerning THE LOVE OF GOD. The love of God being *the firſt and great command*, it would be unpardonable for a chriſtian to hear a ſermon upon that ſubject without minding it, and without being bettered by it.

I will endeavour to ſhew you how you may be truly edified by ſuch a diſcourſe, if you have ſeriouſly attended to it. You will, in the firſt place, have been put in mind, that God is worthy of your greateſt love, and that he may juſtly require it of you, that you love him above all things; becauſe he made you, and it is he who by his providence preſerves you every day of your life, and who is the giver of all the bleſſings you either enjoy or hope for. Beſides this, he intends, out of his infinite goodneſs, to make you happy for ever, if it is not your own fault. And though you know in your conſcience, that you have grievouſly offended God, yet he is ready to pardon you upon your ſincere repentance. And to convince you of this, after the moſt kind and gracious manner, he ſent his beloved Son from heaven to aſſure us thereof, and of his *good-will to men:* by him propoſing terms of pardon and mercy upon moſt reaſonable conditions, and eternal happineſs upon performing them.

His Son alſo procured for us this great favour, that we might apply to God, as to a father, in all our neceſſities, for whatever we

want

want in all our troubles; and this with confidence that he would hear us with the tenderneſs of a father.

Beſides this, you will have been inſtructed what it is *to love God with all your heart*. That it is, to deſire and to ſtrive to pleaſe God in all your actions. To have a great regard to his *laws*; to what he has commanded, and to what he has forbidden. To love his *word*, in which his will is made known to us; and his *miniſters*, who are by him appointed to inſtruct you, and to watch for your ſouls as they that muſt give an account. It is to ſpeak of God after the moſt reſpectful manner, that others may learn by your example to love and reverence him. It is to be pleaſed and rejoice when God is honoured; when things go as God would have them; when juſtice, piety, and charity, do thrive and are encouraged; and to be grieved when God's laws are tranſgreſſed, neglected, or deſpiſed. Laſtly, it is to ſubmit to God's will, and what he orders for you; and to ſuffer any thing rather than knowingly and wilfully to offend God; and to deny yourſelf every thing which you have reaſon to believe will diſpleaſe him.

Having heard all this with ſerioufneſs and attention, you cannot but come to ſome ſuch reſolutions as theſe following:

'I ſee plainly that I can have no ſecurity, 'no real ſatisfaction in life, until I can bring 'my heart to love God ſincerely. In order 'to this, I will often call to mind the many

'beſſings

'bleſſings which I have received from God,
'that I may give him thanks for them, the
'ſureſt way to increaſe my love for him who
'has been ſo good and kind to me. I will
'read or hear his *holy word* with care, that I
'may know his *will*, his *promiſes*, and the
'great reward he has propoſed to his faithful
'ſervants. I will abhor and avoid all ſuch
'perſons, principles, company, and converſa-
'tion, as may leſſen my eſteem for and love of
'God. I will not let the love of the world
'poſſeſs my heart, leſt I forget God, and for-
'get that he is my only good. And becauſe
'love amongſt friends is ſoon loſt for want of
'converſing with one another, I will go to
'God daily, and lay my wants and my deſires
'before him; particularly, I will beg of God
'to pour into my heart ſuch love towards him,
'that I may love him above all things, and
'that his love may be the commanding prin-
'ciple of my life.'

Theſe, I ſay, or ſome ſuch, will be the thoughts and reſolutions of every ſober Chriſtian, who has attended to a ſermon concerning *the love of God*. And he will be more careful to put theſe reſolutions in practice, when he conſiders—that ſuch as do not love God, do really hate God, (as monſtrous a ſin as that is;) that is, they wiſh that there were no ſuch a Being to call them to an account for their wicked deeds. And they are pleaſed with ſuch men, and ſuch arguments, as tend to leſſen their belief of a future ſtate, and a future account.

count. So dreadful is the ſin of hating (that is, of not loving) God!

We will ſuppoſe again, that you had been inſtructed in the meaning and importance of *the ſecond great command*—THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF. It is probable you will have been put in mind of the great ſtreſs that is laid upon this command by Chriſt himſelf: *This commandment have we from him; that he who loveth God, love his brother alſo.*[c] From which you will conclude, that nothing can more effectually recommend you to the favour of God, than a *love for your neighbour*, ſince God has placed this duty the very next to the love we owe to himſelf. You will be careful therefore to remember, what you have learned from Chriſt himſelf as well as from his miniſters, *whom* you are to account your neighbour, and how you are to ſhew your love to him.

You will remember, that every man is your neighbour and your brother, who may be benefited by your love. That God is our common father, and that all we are brethren. That we are all members of the ſame body, of which Jeſus Chriſt is the head. That God has ſo ordered matters, that the members of this body ſhould depend one upon another. That the poor ſhall depend upon the rich for their ſubſiſtence; and the rich, whatever they think of it, ſhall receive a greater advantage from the prayers of the poor.

[c] 1 John iv. 21.

You will then call to mind, how you are to expreſs your love to your neighbour. The command ſays, *you are to love him as yourſelf.* You know, without a teacher, how you love yourſelf. That you wiſh and take ſatisfaction in your own welfare and proſperity. That you are ſorry when any evil or miſchief befals yourſelf. You do not love to have your own faults aggravated, or your good name abuſed; and how ready you are to find excuſes for your own miſtakes. In ſhort, you know very well how you would have others to ſhew their love for you: and that it is no ſmall comfort for the ignorant and unlearned, that their duty is contained in ſo few words, and that they can eaſily underſtand it, by conſidering how they love, how they would be dealt with themſelves.

Theſe things conſidered, you will, if you have any grace in your heart, come to ſome ſuch reſolutions as theſe following:

'I ſee that I am bound, as a chriſtian, and 'at the peril of my ſoul, to be juſt to, to for-'give, and give to, and love and pray for my 'neighbour, as becomes a diſciple of Jeſus 'Chriſt. I will therefore do no wrong to any 'man, though I could hope to be never ſo 'great a gainer by it. I will not oppreſs, 'over-reach, vex, or harraſs others, though it 'ſhould be in my power. I will not envy my 'neighbour's proſperity, nor bear malice in 'my heart, though I could never ſo well con-'ceal it. I will deſpiſe no man living for the 'meanneſs of his condition, or for the misfor-'tunes that may have befallen him; knowing

'very well, that we are all ſubject to misfor-
'tunes, to failings, to every thing that may
'make a man contemptible. I will be ready
'to do good with what God has bleſſed me,
'and even glad to communicate, knowing that
'with ſuch ſacrifices God is pleaſed. I will
'not render evil for evil, though revenge is
'ſweet to fleſh and blood. If any man is my
'enemy without cauſe, I will pray that God
'would convert him; that he will reſtrain and
'keep him from evil and miſchief, which
'otherwiſe will be the greateſt injury to
'himſelf. I will not ſay, that my neighbour
'does not deſerve my love; for if God ſhould
'deal with me according to my deſerts, I
'ſhould be the moſt miſerable creature alive.
'I will not dare to ſay, ſuch a man has injured
'me, and I will not forgive him; becauſe God
'himſelf has declared, that juſt ſo *he* will deal
'with me. I will bear with the infirmities
'of others, hoping that others, and eſpecially
'God himſelf, will bear with mine. I will
'thus endeavour to expreſs my love to my
'neighbour out of love to God, who has com-
'manded me ſo to do; and becauſe I believe
'it will be moſt acceptable to the Divine
'Majeſty. And I will beg of God to give me
'the ſpirit of love; and that the love of God,
'and of my neighbour, may be the command-
'ing principle of my life. And that every
'night of my life I may lie down to ſleep with
'the ſame charitable diſpoſitions with which
'I deſire and hope to die.'

This will be the *true way* OF PROFITING BY SERMONS, and you will return home from God's houſe with a bleſſing.

We will ſuppoſe in the next place, that you had been inſtructed by God's miniſter, concerning *the neceſſity, the indiſpenſible neceſſity of* AN HOLY LIFE. You would not ſure go home, and think no more upon a ſubject which it ſo much concerns you to remember. For you will have been aſſured by the Spirit of God, as well as by the Miniſter of God, *that without holineſs no man muſt ſee the Lord.* That the deſign of all the laws and ordinances of God is, *to make you partaker of a divine nature*; that is, to make you holy, that you may be capable of being happy. And that we are heirs of ſalvation on no other terms but *theſe:* that we ſtudy to pleaſe God in the whole courſe of our lives; and that we muſt not ſatisfy ourſelves with the outward duties of religion, which are of no value in the ſight of God, if they do not help to free us from the ſlavery of ſin, and reſtore us to the image of God.

And to oblige you not to be indifferent in a matter of ſo great concern, you will remember, that you have been often told how very different the portion of good and bad men is ſure to be in the next world. And that if you make God your enemy by an unholy life, you are for ever undone.

You will then begin to think it worth your while to call to mind, in what, as you have been often told, this holineſs conſiſts. That

it is not confined to the time you are at church, or at your prayers, but that it must be the work of your whole life. That you must be holy in your *conversation*, that is, inoffensive and exemplary. Holy in your *dealings*, that is, just and conscientious. Holy with regard to God, reverencing every thing that belongs to him, hearing his word, resolving to be governed by his commands; praying to him for what you want, and praising him for his mercies. That you must be holy with respect to your neighbour; that is, you must do him no mischief; you must relieve him in his necessities; you must pray for him; and forgive him, if he has injured you. Lastly, That you must be holy in what relates to *yourself*; holy in your *devotions*, that is, sincere and without hypocrisy; holy in repenting when you have done amiss, and returning to your duty without delay; holy in moderating your affections for this world, that you may *love the Lord with all your heart*. You must be holy in *prosperity*, that is, not high-minded; holy in *adversity*, that is, patient and resigned to the will of God. You must be holy in your *apparel*, modest and free from pride and vanity; holy in your *diet*, not given to intemperance, to gluttony, or drunkenness; holy in your *diversions*, not making them the great business of your life.

If you are a *parent*, you must express your holiness in bringing up your children in the fear of God; if a *master*, you must be holy, that

that is, juſt to your ſervants, remembering that you yourſelf *have a maſter in heaven.*

In ſhort, you will have been told, that nothing ought to diſcourage you from being as holy as poſſibly you can be; becauſe God, who requires you to be holy, has obliged himſelf to aſſiſt you with ſufficient grace and power; and becauſe the more holy you are, the more happy you are ſure to be when you die.

Now, if you have pondered theſe things in your heart, you cannot but come to ſome ſuch reſolutions as theſe following:

'I am now convinced, that the manner of 'my life is the only proof of my being in the 'favour or under the diſpleaſure of God. 'That to lead a careleſs, thoughtleſs, or a 'uſeleſs life, will certainly bring upon me the 'ſentence of the fruitleſs tree: *Cut it down, 'why cumbereth it the ground?* I will therefore 'endeavour to pleaſe God, by being as careful 'of my ways, and as obedient to his com-'mands, as his grace ſhall enable me to be. 'And ſince he is ſo good as to allow me to 'call him *my father*, I will endeavour to lead 'ſuch a life as becomes the child of ſo holy a 'a father. To this end, I will endeavour to 'underſtand what the will of God is, and will 'compare my life with thoſe rules he has 'given me to walk by, that I may be ſatisfied 'whether I am, in truth, in the way of holi-'neſs or not.

'I will not delude myſelf with ſaying, that 'every man has his faults, and that God is 'merciful: for I underſtand he is *juſt* as well

'as *merciful*; that he hates ſin in every body;
'and that if my faults are ſuch as he hates,
'and has forbidden, and I continue in them,
'I ſhall provoke him to deny me the benefit
'of his mercy, and ſhall feel the ſeverity of his
'juſtice. I will not, therefore, as I love my
'own ſoul, live in any known ſin; but will
'keep a ſtrict watch over my heart and actions,
'and deny myſelf, and part with any pleaſure,
'rather than diſpleaſe God. Nor will I flatter
'myſelf with vain hopes, that I may get habits
'of holineſs hereafter, and before I die; for if
'I think it too ſoon to pleaſe God *now*, he
'may be provoked to deny me his grace, and
'then I ſhall never be holy, never happy.

'And becauſe good purpoſes, without a
'change of life, will ſignify nothing but to
'condemn me, I will therefore beg of God to
'touch my heart moſt powerfully from above,
'that I may not only *reſolve*, but *do*, what he
'would have me.'

Such reſolutions as theſe, every Chriſtian ſhould make, when he hears the word of God read or preached. And, indeed, it is plainly for want of minding the things they hear, and for want of pondering them in their hearts, that Chriſtians are ſo *careleſs*, ſo *ignorant*, and ſo *wicked*. And thoſe very people, who would not for the world deny their religion, or give up their hopes of heaven, are yet in danger of never going to heaven, becauſe they would not hear with attention their duty or their danger, nor ponder them in their hearts.

People

People do not conſider, that want of learning will be no excuſe in a chriſtian country, for their being ignorant of their duty. Such as will attend the church, and pray for God's grace, and hear his word with a ſerious and devout temper, and practiſe what they know, are in as ſure a way of happineſs as the moſt learned. *Take heed, therefore, how ye hear:* and if you would indeed profit by hearing, and carry a bleſſing home with you, imprint upon your heart ſome ſuch truths as theſe:

'This is God's miniſter; what he delivers 'is God's word. I mind attentively my bet-'ters when they ſpeak to me, and I lay it up 'in my heart; and ſhall I forget what my 'Maker has ſaid as ſoon as I am got from his 'preſence? God forbid. I will rather go 'home, and conſider with myſelf what uſe I 'ought to make of what I have heard, and 'will order my life accordingly.'

Do ſo;—and God will increaſe your knowledge and your graces. And the word which you hear will become indeed the word of ſalvation (as St. Paul calls it) to every one that believeth, and ſo receives it.

And may our bleſſed Lord, who has cauſed all holy ſcriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in ſuch wiſe hear, mark, learn, and inwardly digeſt them, that by patience and comfort of his holy word, we may embrace and ever hold faſt the bleſſed hope of everlaſting life, which he has given us in our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

To whom, &c.

SERMON III.

THE TRUE WAY OF PROFITING BY SERMONS.

VOUCHSAFE, O Lord, to direct me, and bleſs this diſcourſe for the good of my flock; that they may glorify Thee for the truths they ſhall hear, and for the bleſſing they ſhall receive, by the miniſtry of the moſt unworthy of thy ſervants, O Sovereign Paſtor! Amen.

LUKE viii. 18.

TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR: FOR WHOSOEVER HATH TO HIM SHALL BE GIVEN; AND WHOSOEVER HATH NOT, FROM HIM SHALL BE TAKEN EVEN THAT WHICH HE SEEMETH TO HAVE.

I Have already, in a former diſcourſe, explained to you what our Lord means by this earneſt caution; namely, To aſſure us, that according to the meaſure of our *love* for God's word, our *attention* in hearing it, and our *care* to profit by it, ſhall be the meaſure of grace which God will give us.

I have already ſhewed you the danger of living under the light of the goſpel, and not being bettered by it: our Saviour ſays expreſsly, *That it ſhall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for ſuch people:* becauſe the word which you hear is

See Amos viii. 11. Matth. xviii, 4. Heb. ii. 1, 2, &c. 1 Theſſ. ii. 13. iv. 1. James i. 21.

" not the word of men, but in truth the word " of God."

This is my beloved Son, ſaith God, *hear ye him*. And it is *his* goſpel we preach, we explain, we preſs upon you. It is *him* you deſpiſe, when you mind not what is ſaid to you by his miniſters. And on the other hand, when you come to church with a ſerious, teachable temper, and hear his word with reverence and ſubmiſſion, you do moſt certainly engage him to enlighten your minds with ſaving truth.

It was for this reaſon I propoſed to ſhew you THE TRUE WAY OF PROFITING BY SERMONS; by ſhewing you how every Chriſtian *ought* and *may* moſt profitably apply the things he hears to himſelf, and form ſuch reſolutions as are moſt likely to influence his practice. I have already done this on ſeveral practical ſubjects, ſuch as moſt nearly concern a chriſtian life; and ſhall now proceed to others of like importance.

Let us then ſuppoſe, that you have heard a diſcourſe concerning THE DANGER OF KEEPING BAD COMPANY—*of converſing with people of wicked principles or wicked lives.*

To be ſure you will have been put in mind, how many have been ruined by an unwiſe choice of ſuch companions; how many have got habits of idleneſs, of intemperance, of trifling away their time and their eſtates; have been ſtrangely corrupted both in their principles and in their manners.

You

You will, with great truth, have been aſſured, that in all companies where men make a mock of ſin, ſpeak lightly of God, and profanely of any thing that belongs to him; there Satan infallibly governs, inſpires his agents, and more or leſs infects all that are preſent;—that you will in time be content to hear the moſt ſerious things made a jeſt of, and to wiſh inwardly that the things you were taught to believe were not true, and that there was no God to call you to an account.

You do not know but the company you are fond of are Atheiſts, men under the government of Satan: if you live as they do, you will in time believe as they do, whatever at preſent you may think of it.

You will have been aſſured, that nothing more provokes God to deprive men of his Holy Spirit, and of his graces, than the frequenting of wicked company, where things hateful to God are ſaid and done.

Laſtly; you will have heard, from the inſpired writer, that *wine, and new wine, take away the heart*; [*i. e.* the underſtanding:] and every one who is given to drinking and company will find it ſo to his ſorrow, when it may be too late to return to a ſober mind; ſad experience convincing us, that one need but taſte a ſinful pleaſure, or frequent bad company a very little while, to be very fond of them, and a ſlave to them.

If I ſhould obſerve any young perſon very ſerious and attentive when he hears theſe truths,

I ſhould

I ſhould conclude that ſuch perſon will make ſome ſuch reflections as theſe following:

'I thank God that I have had this fair 'warning given me. I am convinced that bad 'company has coſt many a man very dear. I 'have within me the ſame ſeeds of wicked-'neſs with other people; and if God leaves 'me to my own choices, and I make choice 'of bad company, I ſhall be as wicked as the 'worſt of them; my heart will be infected, 'my faith weakened, my good purpoſes cool-'ed, and all my graces injured. I am con-'vinced of the difficulty of getting out of the 'ſnare, and of breaking off evil habits; and 'that if I provoke God to withdraw his Spi-'rit, I never can repent, never can return to 'a ſober mind. I will therefore keep in my 'mind the words of the apoſtle,—*Evil com-'munications corrupt good manners*; and I am 'reſolved, by the grace of God, to avoid, as 'I would the devil, the company of all ſuch 'by whoſe looſe principles and lewd examples 'my faith may be corrupted, or my morals 'endangered.'

I perſuade myſelf that all young perſons, who have any grace left, will make ſome ſuch reſolutions as theſe, and will beg of God the grace to keep them.

How many diſcourſes have Chriſtians heard concerning another reigning vice, THE SINS OF IMPURITY, FORNICATION, AND UNCLEANNESS, without being bettered by what either God or his Miniſters have ſaid upon thoſe ſubjects.

ſubjects. They have heard, for inſtance, God's expreſs declaration, "That whoremongers and adulterers God will judge; that "they ſhall have their part in the lake that "burneth with fire and brimſtone."[b] That God abhors ſuch as fall into theſe ſins, and do not immediately repent and forſake them.

They have as often been put in mind of the difficulty of forſaking theſe ſins; becauſe theſe ſins do blind the underſtanding, waſte and harden the conſcience, blot out all good purpoſes, grieve the Spirit of God, drive him from them, and give the devil the greateſt power over thoſe that live in them. They ſee with their own eyes the pains people take to conceal theſe vices; which ſhould convince Chriſtians how ſhameful they really are. And they have often heard what St. Paul has ſaid of theſe ſins: "That they are ſuch as "ſhould not ſo much as be named among "Chriſtians."

Laſtly, Chriſtians know that God has appointed *lawful marriage* as a means to prevent theſe ſins, ſo hateful to God, and ſo deſtructive to men. And yet this unclean ſpirit reigns in the world without controul; very many fall into theſe ſins, many live in them, and too many make a jeſt of them.

What can be the reaſon of this? Why: Chriſtians, when they hear theſe things, do not mind them; they do not think of them after they leave the church; they do not ponder them in their hearts.

[b] Hebrews xiii. 4.

Young

Young people, when they hear theſe things, ſhould aſk themſelves ſome ſuch queſtions as theſe:

'Do I really believe, that, by falling into 'theſe ſins, I ſhall loſe the favour of God, 'and muſt expect a moſt fearful judgment if 'I continue in them? I dare not ſay I do 'not believe this: and if I do believe theſe 'truths, my crime will admit of no excuſe; 'I ſhall be ſelf-condemned, and loſt irrecover-'ably, and ruined for ever, if I go on and 'continue in ſuch ſins as theſe. I will not 'flatter myſelf that God will be merciful to 'me, though I continue in ſin; he was the 'ſame merciful God who, for theſe ſins, de-'ſtroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from 'heaven. I am to judge by this of God's 'mercy when it is abuſed. I will not ven-'ture upon theſe ſins in hopes of repenting 'before I die; for at the beſt I can but repent 'for myſelf; I cannot repent for thoſe I ſhall 'corrupt, whoſe blood will be required at 'my hands. I will not make myſelf eaſy, 'becauſe I may hope to hide my crimes; for 'I am aſſured, that God will bring to light 'the hidden works of darkneſs, when the 'ſtouteſt, hardeſt heart ſhall be aſhamed and 'made to tremble. I will therefore endea-'vour to imprint theſe terrors upon my heart, 'and preſerve my innocence, as I love my 'own ſoul. I will avoid, as much as I can, 'all temptations to theſe ſins; idleneſs, in-'temperance; all company that make a jeſt

'of

'of theſe crimes; all people that have loſt 'their modeſty; all whom the devil has in-'ſpired with immodeſt ſtories, filthy diſcourſe, 'lewd ſongs; in ſhort, all that diſcover, by 'their idle talk and wanton behaviour, that 'they only want to be tempted, that they 'only want an occaſion, to be lewd.'

If the devil, as be ſure he will, lays a temptation in my way, a young man, who has any grace left, will ſay, in the words of Joſeph, on the like occaſion, *How can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?*

A woman, who has not quite loſt her modeſty, will, on the like occaſion, argue with herſelf in the words of Tamer, David's daughter: *I, whither ſhall I cauſe my ſhame to go*, if conſent to this foul crime?

And knowing that I have not the power of reſiſting temptations in my own hands, I will pray to God every day of my life, to give me grace and ſtrength to reſiſt all temptations, which will coſt me ſo very dear.

And ſuch as have been ſo unhappy as to have fallen into theſe ſins will repent forthwith, and be very watchful for the time to come, if they will but think ſeriouſly of the words of Chriſt! *that the unclean ſpirit will return with ſeven others more wicked than himſelf:* and then what deſtruction will they make!

Theſe are the reflections that Chriſtians ſhould make, and will make, if they have any grace, when they hear a diſcourſe of *the dreadful conſequence of ſins of impurity.*

There

There is another very great and very common ſin, very little minded; however, I would beg you would lay to heart both the *guilt* and the *curſe* that attends it. It is *the ſin of profaning* THE NAME OF GOD *to idle or wicked purpoſes.*

This is done every day, without fear and without thought; though it is a ſin moſt diſpleaſing to God, for which he will not hold men guiltleſs; that is, he will puniſh them in an extraordinary manner: becauſe the impious cuſtom *of ſwearing in common converſation*, ſtrikes directly at the honour of God; it makes his *name*, that is, God himſelf, contemptible; it leſſens men's eſteem and reverence for him that made them; and treats him as an idol, which can do them neither good nor hurt. By this impious cuſtom, men come to loſe the fear of an oath; ſo that oaths and vows are no manner of rule by which we can judge whether they ſpeak true or falſe. From common ſwearing they come to curſing themſelves and others; from curſing to blaſphemy, and from blaſphemy to downright atheiſm; to ſay, at leaſt to wiſh, that there was no God.

You will therefore, when you hear theſe things, as ever you hope to eſcape the vengeance of God; you will lay theſe truths to heart, and reſolve with yourſelf as follows:

'I will always endeavour to ſpeak of God 'with an awe and reverence upon my mind. 'If I am called to take a *ſolemn oath*, I will 'conſider

'consider the meaning and terror of those 'words with which it is bound upon me, so 'HELP YOU GOD! and then I shall conclude, 'that as ever I expect the help of God when 'I shall most want it, I am bound to speak 'the very truth. As for *rash, customary oaths*, 'I will abhor the appealing to God, as every 'man does who swears, with a lie or a trifle 'in my mouth. If ever I shall be so unhappy 'as to be surprised into such a sin, I will im-'mediately beg God's pardon, and resolve to 'do so no more. And lest such oaths should 'become less dreadful to me, and more fami-'liar, I will avoid, as I would the devil, or 'leave the company of every man who is given 'to such vices, lest I should provoke God to 'leave me to myself, and lest I should become 'as bad as the worst.

'That I may not take the name of God in 'vain, when I am at my prayers, and wor-'shipping him, I will endeavour that my 'words and heart shall go together. To this 'end I will consider, that all the prayers of 'the church begin with such expressions as 'are most proper to make us mind to whom 'we speak; that it is—*to an Almighty God, 'and merciful Father, to whom all hearts are 'open, all desires known; who is the fountain of 'all wisdom and goodness, the creator and pre-'server of mankind; whose nature and property 'is always to have mercy and to forgive.*'

These and such expressions, if attended to, will call back a roving mind, and fix it upon

the duty you are about; will awaken the moſt careleſs, and melt down the moſt ſtubborn heart.

Whoever comes to theſe reſolutions, which all people will do who are afraid *to take God's name in vain*, will not often ſpeak *of* God, or *to* God, without *thought*, without *reaſon*, and without *reverence*.

The next great ſin to this is that of PROFANING THE LORD'S DAY. You hear the command of God touching this ſin, and your duty, every ſuch day. And you hear your duty often preſſed upon you in ſermons; and too often you return home *without profiting by the one or the other*

Do but conſider the reaſon of this:—Why; you do not attend ſeriouſly to what you hear; or you forget it as ſoon as you leave the church; or you do not apply the truths you hear to yourſelf, or come to any ſober reſolutions concerning them. For is it poſſible that you ſhould hear and believe that God has expreſsly commanded one day in ſeven to be kept holy? That *he hath bleſſed that day*; that is, he has joined an eſpecial bleſſing to the due obſervation of it. That it is a day dedicated to the honour and worſhip of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour. That if men were not on theſe days put in mind of the duty they owe to God; and if certain perſons were not by his command appointed to keep up the knowledge of God, and of our dependance upon him, we ſhould ſoon loſe the knowledge

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of the true God, (as many nations have done) all ſenſe of piety, all concern for what *muſt* come hereafter, whether men know, whether they think of it or not. And laſtly, that ſuch as do not keep this day holy, by going to the aſſemblies of the faithful, do, in effect, excommunicate themſelves.

Is it poſſible, I ſay, that a Chriſtian, when he is put in mind of theſe truths, ſhould not come to ſome ſuch firm reſolutions as theſe:—

'I will conſider who it is that has given 'me this command: that it is He who gives 'me all my time, and who bleſſeth all my la- 'bours. I will conſider what it is he has com- 'manded me: why; that I ſhould, for one 'day in ſeven, leave all my worldly cares and 'concerns in his hands, whoſe bleſſing upon 'one day's labour is of more value than the 'whole week's work without it: and that I 'ſhould dedicate this day to his honour; to 'give him thanks for his care over me; to 'acknowledge and adore his infinite perfec- 'tions, his *power*, his *wiſdom*, his *goodneſs*, his '*truth*, and his *juſtice*. And laſtly, to ac- 'knowledge my own miſery without his 'bleſſing; and that I am ſubject to *ignorance*, 'to *want*, to *troubles*, to *ſickneſs*, to *ſin*, and to '*death*, even to *death eternal*.

'I will therefore reſolve, as ever I hope for 'a bleſſing in this life, or for happineſs in the 'next, *I will remember the Lord's day to keep 'it holy*. I will go to the houſe of God, and 'confeſs my own unworthineſs, and his infi-

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'nite goodneſs. I will appear before God, 'with my *heart* as well as with my *body*. I 'will confeſs my ſins unto God, and hope for 'a ſhare in the abſolution pronounced by his 'miniſter in his name. I will attend to his 'word, and ſay a *ſerious Amen* to the graces 'and bleſſings there prayed for: and I will 'receive, with the greateſt devotion, *the ſolemn* '*bleſſing* of the prieſt of God, by which he 'diſmiſſeth the congregation; becauſe I have 'the ſure promiſe of God himſelf,[h] that his 'bleſſing ſhall attend the bleſſing pronounced 'by his prieſt.

'I will then return home, and conſider ſe-'rioufly what I have heard, and then I will 'lay all my own particular wants before the 'throne of grace. I will conſider, that it is 'God's own day; that it is the day of giving 'pardon to ſinners; of giving grace to the 'humble; of giving comfort to the afflicted; 'of giving ſtrength to the weak; of giving 'bleſſings to all that call upon him in ſincerity.

'And laſtly, I will pray God to deliver me 'from all thoſe ways by which this good day 'is generally profaned. Nor will I ſpend 'that time in *idleneſs*, in *ſloth*, in *trifling*, with a 'careleſs indifference, which is conſecrated to 'the honour of God, and deſigned to prepare 'me for an eternal reſt hereafter.'

Make ſuch reſolutions as theſe, when you hear this duty recommended and explained; and depend upon God for his bleſſing upon them.

[h] Numb. vi. 23, &c.

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When one conſiders what ſteps people take from one ſin to another, till they become very often both *hardened* and *reprobate*: one muſt conclude, that ſuch people never ſeriouſly attended to what the Scriptures have told us concerning the DECEITFULNESS OF SIN. *That if men will not retain God in their knowledge, God will give them up to a mind void of judgment, to work all iniquity with greedineſs.*

That this has been the caſe of an infinite number of people, who have fallen into crimes and courſes, which once in their lives they abhorred the thoughts of; that the moſt profligate ſinners did once hate thoſe vices they now are ſo fond of; and were afraid of that God, whoſe threats and judgments they *now* never mind, or fear: that moſt people, before they were corrupted, did bluſh, and ſtart, and were aſhamed of doing a baſe, or an unworthy thing, which *now* never diſturbs them: tha twhen men have once loſt the fear of God, they will do what pleaſeth themſelves, though all the world ſees their folly, and what their end will be: and that there is no wickedneſs that can be named, which ſuch people have not at laſt fallen into:—We have very many ſcripture examples which confirm this truth.

A prince,[c] beloved of God, but giving way to his luſts, firſt corrupts the wife, and then murders her huſband. His ſon,[d] by the ſame ſteps, falling into groſs and ſenſeleſs idolatry.

[c] David. [d] Solomon.

Another

Another great man[c] aſking the prophet, "Am I a dog, to do ſuch things as you ſay I "ſhall one day come to do?" Which yet he afterwards did without ſcruple.

By theſe inſtances you ſhould be convinced, that neither the greateſt wiſdom, nor the beſt education, nor the greateſt favours of God, nor the good opinion we may have of our own ſenſe and reſolutions, can ſecure us, when once we give way to our own appetites to do what God has forbidden.

You ſee a *commom ſwearer*. You think little of it. You eſteem it a frailty only. You do not ſee the end of this ſin; that it leads to impiety, to perjury, to atheiſm, and damnation.

You ſee a *tipler*, or a *drunkard*. The ſin is ſo common you mind it not. You do not ſee the end of it; his family and his affairs are neglected; God and religion, and his ſoul, are the leaſt of his thoughts or concern; he grows ſottiſh and thoughtleſs, contracts diſtempers, and dies hardened, or in deſpair.

You ſee another given to *lewd*, *filthy*, or *profane talk*. You laugh with him, and ſee no harm in it. You would tremble if you could ſee what this leads to. He grows debauched, becomes fearleſs of offending God, hardened in wickedneſs and infidelity, and is taken off in his ſin. This does not affect you, becauſe you are yet alive.

If people will deſpiſe the Lord's day; neglect the ordinances; refuſe to hear God's word, or to know his will; he will withdraw

[c] Hazael.

his

his graces, they will grow more careleſs, and at laſt profeſſedly wicked, and ripe for judgment.

You have often heard what St. Paul obſerves, that INFIDELITY, *the not retaining God in their knowledge*, was the occaſion of the vileſt ſins that ever were thought of. You may be aſſured of it, the ſame cauſe will at all times have the ſame dreadful effects.

In ſhort, the beginning of ſin is not regarded; but one evil habit certainly begets another, till men forget God; till God forſakes them, and leaves them to themſelves; till they have filled up the meaſure of their ſins; and till God ſends upon them ſwift deſtruction.

Well then; will you hear ſuch truths as theſe without profiting by them? Can you poſſibly leave the church without coming to ſome ſuch reflections and reſolutions as theſe following:—

'I ſee plainly, that human nature is the 'ſame, and extremely corrupt in all men: 'that without the grace of God, we can do 'no good thing: that if by my ſins I ſhould 'grieve the Spirit of God, and force him to 'leave me to myſelf, I cannot foreſee what I 'ſhall do; what I ſhall be; what doom I ſhall 'bring upon myſelf. I am convinced, that if 'I deſire to avoid the greater ſins, I muſt re-'ſolve to reſiſt the very beginnings of ſin, the 'very leaſt thing that I believe will diſpleaſe 'God; and that if I do not do ſo, and get 'once out of God's way, one ſin will infalli-

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'bly lead to another. I ſee what blindneſs, 'what wickedneſs, ſinners have been capable 'of, when once they have been left to them-'ſelves: that they could neither *think*, nor *act*, 'nor *live*, like men that had reaſon. I will 'endeavour, (will every ſerious Chriſtian ſay) 'I will live in the fear of God, that I may 'never conſent to known iniquity. This is 'the only ſecurity againſt the greateſt crimes: 'to be afraid of thoſe judgments which God 'has threatened to ſinners, and of thoſe ways 'which he has aſſured us will be our ruin. 'I will not, therefore, go againſt my conſci-'ence in the leaſt thing whatever; being 'thoroughly convinced, that I cannot take 'up when I pleaſe. I ſee the danger of con-'tinuing in any known ſin: if therefore I 'ſhall be ſo unhappy as to fall into ſin, I will 'follow the example of holy David: *I made 'haſte*, ſaid he, *and delayed not, to keep thy com-'mandments*. And I will walk humbly before 'God, knowing that I have nothing of my 'own to boaſt of; neither my own reaſon, 'nor my own ſtrength, nor my beſt reſolu-'tions, will ſecure me from falling into ſin, 'without the help of God.

'I have the comfort of knowing—that 'while I fear to *offend*, and ſincerely deſire to '*pleaſe* God, I ſhall be under the protection 'of his good providence: he will give his holy 'angels charge concerning me: he will in-'ſpire me with a dread of ſuch things as 'would hurt me; ſupport me under tempta-

'tions;

'tions; correct me when I am going wrong; 'awaken my conſcience; lay reſtraints upon 'my paſſions; and keep me from ſuch ſins 'as are the ruin of thoſe that forget God. In 'ſhort, the wrath of God is, in the goſpel of 'Chriſt, ſo plainly revealed againſt all that 'live wickedly, that all ſuch as do ſo will (to 'make their minds eaſy) either repent and 'forſake their ſins, or ſtrive to blot the know-'ledge of God out of their minds, and turn 'infidels. For fear, therefore, of falling into 'that moſt dreadful judgment, I will reſolve, 'by the grace of God, not to live in any 'known ſin, leſt in time I become an atheiſt.'

Theſe are the reſolutions, or ſome ſuch as theſe, that you ſhould make when you hear a ſermon concerning *the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and the ſteps ſinners take to their ruin.*

Chriſtians muſt never hope to eſcape falling into ſins of every kind, who do not ſeriouſly attend to what God has made known to us concerning *the nature of* TEMPTATIONS *and* TRIALS, *and the way not to be hurt by them.*

They are charged, as they value their ſouls, to watch againſt temptations, and to pray continually, that they may not fall into or be overcome by them. They are aſſured, by the Spirit of God, that the devil is perpetually ſeeking whom he may devour, finding them off their guard, and from under God's protection. They are put in mind of their own frailty, that they may look up to God perpetually, and depend upon his grace. They

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are over and over again told, that there is no condition of life but what is ſubject to temptations; that every man living has reaſon to be upon his guard againſt the wiles of the devil, ſince he had power to prevail with Judas to betray the Son of God himſelf, with the chief of God's prieſts to accuſe him moſt wrongfully, and with Pilate to condemn him againſt his conſcience. They have the example of our firſt parents, to convince them how weak they are, and what *will* be the effects of giving way to the ſuggeſtions of the devil. They ſee, every day, Chriſtians who have vowed to renounce the *devil*, the *world*, and the *luſts of the fleſh*, as much led by them as the very heathens.

Theſe things, one ſhould hope, might awaken Chriſtians, and *make them flee from the wrath to come*; but God knows, it is too often that they are never minded.

Chriſtians hear them with indifference; they leave the church, and *Satan cometh immediately, and taketh the word out of their hearts, leſt they ſhould believe and be ſaved.* They meet with temptations at every turn, and are drawn away either by their *luſts*, or by *evil examples*, and are in the direct way of ruin.

Why now, what do people come to church for, but to be put in mind of theſe things, that they may lay them up in their hearts: and that they may in good earneſt pray *to be delivered from evil?*

Let us beſeech you, therefore, good Chriſtians, when you hear ſuch truths as theſe—

ponder them in your hearts, and come to ſome reſolutions about them.

Say to yourſelves—'I have this day been 'told, (what I hope I ſhall not forget) that I 'have a watchful enemy to deal with; that I 'have a very corrupt heart, too ready to yield 'to his ſuggeſtions; and that I have bad 'examples, too many, to lead me aſtray, and 'to my ruin. I dare not, therefore, preſume 'upon my own ſtrength, upon my own wiſ-'dom, or conduct; *but my whole truſt ſhall be in* 'God. I will moſt earneſtly beg of him not to 'leave me to my own choices, but to diſcover 'to me the dangers I am liable to, and that 'he will enable me to *reſiſt* and overcome them. 'I have been aſſured, *that God's grace is ſuffi-*'*cient*, and therefore I will neither deſpair nor 'be dejected. I will never run into the tempt-'ations which, in my daily prayers, I pray 'God I may not be led into. I will remember 'the word of God: *Let him that thinketh he* '*ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.* Neither will I 'hearken unto the ſuggeſtions of the devil, 'but RESIST HIM, (as I am exhorted by the 'Apoſtle) and then I am aſſured, *that he can-*'*not get an advantage over me.* I will conſider 'who it is that puts me upon forbidden 'things; that it is the ſame Satan who ſaid 'to our Saviour, *All theſe things will I give* '*thee:* that it is the ſame evil ſpirit, or his an-'gels, who ſuggeſts to me,—*that* pleaſure will 'not hurt you,—*that* revenge is ſweet,—*that* 'gain, *thoſe* riches, will make you happy.'

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It is the ſame ſpirit that would make you believe, that there is no hurt in an idle, uſeleſs life; that there is no harm in ſpending your eſtate or your time; that they are your own, and you may do what you pleaſe with them. It is the ſame Satan, that tempts you to neglect the worſhip of God, and to think it a burthen; that perſuades you to believe, that you have time enough to repent in, and to lead a new life; and that in the mean time you may follow the deſires of your own heart. Laſtly, it is the ſame evil ſpirit, who when you purpoſe to lead a new life, and forget your good purpoſes; it is the ſame ſpirit *that takes with him ſeven other ſpirits more wicked than himſelf*, in order to make your condition more deſperate.

You will conſider, therefore, what you loſe by not attending to, and profiting by, God's word; by not pondering it in your heart; and by not reſolving to be governed by it: that is, you are like to loſe your ſoul.

God deliver us all from ſuch negligence and blindneſs; and give us grace to *hear*, and *attend* to, and *remember*, and *profit* by, his holy word; through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

To whom, &c.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

THE TRUE WAY OF PROFITING BY SERMONS.

LUKE viii. 18.

TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR: FOR WHOSOEVER HATH, TO HIM SHALL BE GIVEN; AND WHOSOEVER HATH NOT, FROM HIM SHALL BE TAKEN EVEN THAT WHICH HE SEEMETH TO HAVE.[a]

I Have already conſidered theſe words, and this warning, of our Lord; as alſo the great hazard Chriſtians run, who live under the ordinances of the goſpel, and do not profit by them.

If it be a great misfortune not to know the goſpel, (as moſt ſure it is) it is a much greater, to hear and to know the truths of the goſpel, and not to mind them. It was this great ſin with which the prophet Ezekiel charged the people of Iſrael: *This people have eyes to ſee, and ſee not; they have ears to hear, and hear not.* And it was the ſame crime with which our Saviour ſo often charged the Jews, their poſterity; and which was at laſt the cauſe of their deſtruction: *Hearing, ye hear, and will not underſtand.*

[a] See Ezek. xii. 2. Hoſ. viii. 12. Matth. xiii. 14. Luke vi. 47. John xii. 48. Acts iii. 23. James i. 21, 22.

And

And to *ſuch as had ears to hear*, that is, the ears of the heart, he gave the charge ſet down in the text, *Take heed how ye hear:* for according to the meaſure of your attention, and your ſincere deſire to profit by what you hear, will be the meaſure of the grace and knowledge which God will give you.

Purſuant to this ſtrict charge of our Lord and Saviour, I ſhall continue to ſhew you the true way of profiting by what you hear, of PROFITING BY SERMONS. And be aſſured of it, Chriſtians, that your ſalvation in a great meaſure depends upon your doing ſo. *Bleſſed are they*, ſaith our Lord, *that hear the word of God, and keep it.*[b] And he aſſures us in another place,[c] that the not profiting by the word of God will be puniſhed more ſeverely than the greateſt crimes.

I ſhall uſe no more words to perſuade you, *now*, and at all times, carefully to mind what you hear from *God's word*, and from his *miniſters:* but I ſhall proceed (as I have done before) to ſhew you how you may profit by ſome of the moſt important ſubjects which you will hear very often preſſed upon you.

For inſtance: There are no ſubjects which Chriſtians are more concerned to underſtand and lay to heart, than thoſe which are called THE FOUR LAST THINGS, namely, *Death*, *Judgment*, *Heaven*, and *Hell*. *Death* is not to be avoided—the time uncertain; the *judgment* which muſt follow, will be without ap-

[b] Luke xi. 28. [c] Luke x. 14.

peal;

peal; and the ſentence will ſend us either to *heaven* or *hell.*

Will you, good Chriſtians, hear theſe ſubjects at any time explained, and preſſed upon you, without laying them to heart? God forbid. Every man that wiſhes well to his own ſoul, will (when he hears theſe things) argue and reſolve with himſelf after ſome ſuch way as this:—

'I have this day been put in mind of ſome 'truths, which I have not conſidered ſo well 'as I ſhould have done,—*that the ſentence of* 'death is already paſſed upon me, *and that God* 'only knows when that ſentence will be put in 'execution. That whenever it is put in exe-'cution, the moment I die, my fate is deter-'mined for ever. That I muſt not ſay, *when* 'I die there will be an end of me; ſo far from 'that, that *then* will begin my happineſs or 'miſery. And laſtly, that God may be pro-'voked to ſhorten my days, when he ſees that 'I am like to make no good uſe of them: it 'was ſo done by the unfruitful tree; *Cut it* 'down; *why cumbereth it the ground?* How 'very ſerious ſhould this make me, and all 'that hear and believe theſe things!

'For my own part,' (will every ſerious Chriſtian ſay to himſelf) 'I will, by the 'grace of God, be no longer deaf to this call, 'nor flatter myſelf, that my *time*, my *repent-'ance*, my *ſalvation*, will be always in my own 'power. I will conſider, as I have been ex-'horted to do, what I was ſent into the world

'for:

'for:—that I am upon my trial; and that as 'I behave myſelf well or ill *here*, I ſhall be 'happy or miſerable when I die. That if my 'corrupt nature be not changed for the better 'before I leave this world, I muſt never hope 'to go to heaven. I will not forget what I 'have been put in mind of: what a dreadful 'thing it will be, if I ſhould be ſurpriſed by 'death, while I am leading a *careleſs*, an *uſeleſs*, 'or a *ſinful life*; before I have done any good 'in my generation; and when I have nothing 'to look back on, but what muſt render me 'altogether unworthy of mercy.

'That this may not be my ſad caſe when I 'come to die, I will no longer defer making 'my peace with God by a ſpeedy repentance, 'leſt my caſe grow every day more deſperate, 'as moſt ſurely it will; and that I may have 'time to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, '—the only ſure ſign that my repentance 'was ſincere!

'In the next place, that I may not be diſ-'tracted with the cares of this world, when 'my thoughts ſhould be upon another, I will 'ſettle my worldly concerns while I am in 'health, and after ſuch a manner as no curſe 'may cleave to any thing I ſhall leave behind 'me. In the mean time, I will endeavour to 'mortify all my evil and corrupt affections, 'and to wean my heart from the love of a 'world which I muſt leave ſo very ſoon. I 'will ſtrive to live in peace with all the world, 'and every night lie down to ſleep with the

'ſame

'ſame charitable diſpoſitions with which I 'deſire and hope to die. I will endeavour to 'ſecure an intereſt in the mercy of God, at 'the hour of death, by acts of *juſtice*, *mercy*, 'and *charity*, while I live. I will, as I have 'been exhorted to do, endeavour always to be 'found in the way of my duty, that when my 'Lord comes, he may find me ſo doing, and 'that I may hear thoſe comfortable words; '*Well done, good and faithful ſervant!* I will en-'deavour in the mean time to be pleaſed with 'all God's choices, that when ſickneſs and 'death approach, it may be no new thing to 'me to ſubmit *my will* to the will of God. I 'will conſider *ſickneſs*, and all thoſe *afflictions* '*which lead to death*, as ordered by a gracious 'God and Father; and that they muſt be 'the effect of his mercy, who cannot take 'delight in the miſeries of his creatures; and 'who could take us out of the world with-'out the leaſt notice, were it for his glory 'and for our good.

'Laſtly, I will (as I have been taught) con-'ſider *death* as a righteous ſentence of God 'paſſed upon all men for ſin, and which he 'will graciouſly accept as a ſacrifice, in union 'with that of Jeſus Chriſt, for all the ſins 'which we have truly repented of.

'Such a preparation for death as this, I am 'convinced, will free me from the fear of 'death, and from all other fears which are 'worſe than death.

'*The ſting of death is ſin*; it is this which 'makes death frightful. If I can have any 'reaſonable aſſurance, that my ſins will be 'forgiven, my death will then be a paſſage 'only to a much better world; and, if it has 'not been my own fault, I may ſay with St. 'Paul, *to me to die is gain.*'

Theſe are the truths which every Chriſtian ſhould remember; theſe the reſolutions he ſhould make, whenever he hears a diſcourſe of *death*, in order to the making his peace with God; that his death may be a bleſſing to him, and that he may find mercy at the great DAY OF JUDGMENT.

That is another article of a Chriſtian man's faith, which you will often hear recommended to you from the pulpit, and from the word of God, as a ſubject of the greateſt concern to you.

For the love, therefore, that you have for your own ſouls, do not *read* or *hear* of the DAY OF JUDGMENT, without reſolving to profit by it. Let every man *think*, and *argue*, and *reſolve* thus with himſelf:—

'If the bitterneſs of death were over when 'our heads are laid in the grave, it would then 'be no great matter how we live, or how we 'die; but when God has expreſsly told us,[4] '*That he has appointed a day in the which he* '*will judge the world in righteouſneſs*; and that 'he has given the world notice and *aſſurance* 'of this, by his raiſing of his Son Jeſus Chriſt

[4] Acts xvii. 31.

from

'from the dead; this makes it a matter of 'concern, indeed, how we ſpend our lives. 'He *will judge the world in righteouſneſs*; that 'is, He will render to every man according 'to his works done in the body, whether they 'have been good or evil.

'How often,' (ought every Chriſtian to ſay with concern) 'how often have I heard this 'without thinking how to prepare for that 'great day, and the account I am then to 'make! I ſee what great reaſon the church 'had to put that prayer into my mouth, *In the 'hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good 'Lord deliver me.* And I ſee too what reaſon 'I have never to repeat that prayer but with 'the greateſt zeal and devotion, *that I may find 'mercy at that day.* But then (as I hope for 'mercy at that day) I muſt think of it, and 'prepare for it; and order my life according 'to that law by which I am then to be judged, 'acquitted, or condemned. In order to this, 'I ſee I muſt, (as I have been exhorted to 'do) not ſuffer myſelf to loſe the ſight of 'that *great day*, either by buſineſs, pleaſures, 'or diverſions; but my great concern muſt 'be, (will every ſerious Chriſtian ſay to him-ſelf) my care muſt be, to govern my life 'and actions with an eye to the account I 'muſt then give, and the judgment that muſt 'follow. My care muſt *now* be to judge my-'ſelf, that I may not be condemned of the 'Lord. And the way I have been directed 'is this;—never to ſtifle or ſilence my con-

'ſcience, but let it paſs a righteous ſentence
'upon every thing I do, or undertake; and
'to aſk myſelf, upon every occaſion, ſome
'ſuch queſtions as theſe:—

'What account ſhall I give to my great
'Judge, for this *idle*, *uſeleſs* life I now lead?
'What account can I give for the eſtate his
'providence has put into my hands? What
'uſe have I made of the talents he has en-
'truſted me with;—of the *authority* he has
'given me, in order to promote his honour
'and the good of my fellow-creatures;—of
'the *riches* he has given me, that I may be
'able to relieve the neceſſities of ſuch as are
'in want;—of the *knowledge* he has vouch-
'ſafed me, that I may be able to inſtruct the
'ignorant? All theſe I muſt *then* account for,
'as ſure as I *now* live; though I am account-
'able to nobody *now*, and though I think not
'of the account I am to give. Will not this
'forbidden pleaſure, this unrighteous gain,
'which I have ſet my heart upon, will it not
'one day riſe up in judgment againſt me?
'How ſhall I be able to anſwer for this *trou-*
'*ble*, this *wrong*, this *hardſhip*, this unjuſt
'*vexation*, I am going to give my neighbour?
'I have it in the power of my hand to do
'what I pleaſe. Be it ſo. But what advan-
'tage will *that* be to me, when I ſhall have
'to do with an Almighty God, who has de-
'clared, *That mighty men ſhall be mightily tor-*
'*mented?* I have now *no* fear upon my ſpirits.
'Well; but remember that a day is coming,

'when

'when the ſtouteſt, the ſtubborneſt heart 'upon earth will tremble.

'What folly, what madneſs, muſt it be to 'provoke Him by my ungodly deeds, who is 'to be my judge, to acquit or condemn me!'

Let that man, who does *now* blaſpheme the name of the great God, but think with himſelf—How ſhall I ſtand before him in judgment? 'I will bring you off—I will 'gain your cauſe,'—ſaith a ſkilful lawyer: but can you bring me off, if my cauſe be unjuſt, when I ſhall ſtand before the great Judge of the world?

A man may ſay to himſelf—This is a *poor*, *ignorant*, *friendleſs* perſon I have to deal with; I can deal with him as I pleaſe. But hold a little, and conſider; can you deal as you pleaſe with Him who has declared himſelf to be "the helper of the friendleſs; the avenger of "the fatherleſs and the widow?"

Well, ſays another thoughtleſs man to himſelf, nobody knows, nor ſhall know, this that I am going about. Alas! you conclude too haſtily: does not *he* know it, *to whoſe eyes all things are naked and open*, and who has declared, that *he will bring every the moſt ſecret thing into judgment?*

Why, (will every thoughtful Chriſtian argue with himſelf) why ſhould I ſpend my whole life in that which will not profit me in the day of judgment? It will not then be aſked, whether I was rich, or poor; but how I bore my poor condition, or what uſe I made of my

my riches? We are told by our Judge himſelf, what queſtions will be aſked at that day. And will it not be the higheſt wiſdom for every man to aſk himſelf thoſe queſtions *now*, that he may know what anſwers to make?

For inſtance:—Let me aſk myſelf, have I been merciful to poor and needy people, and to ſuch as were deſtitute of help and comfort? If you have not, it concerns you, above all things, to conſider how you will be able to bear that doom which will then be paſſed by your Judge: *Go, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; naked, and ye clothed me not.*[e]

And if this is to be the ſad ſentence which ſhall be paſſed upon the hard-hearted and uncharitable at the great day, what muſt the *oppreſſor* expect? What have *they* to fear, who waſte their eſtates in riotous living, in pride and vanity, while ſo many are in want even of the neceſſaries of life? What will they have to ſay for themſelves, who have done nothing towards their ſalvation? Why; they will be in the ſad condition of that man, *who had not on him a wedding garment:*[f] They will ſtand ſpeechleſs: their ſin and their conſcience will ſtop their mouth.

Such as theſe *will* be, or *ought* to be, the mmeditations of every ſerious Chriſtian, when he hears a diſcourſe concerning a *future judgment*, or when he hears that great day mentioned in ſcripture.

[e] Matth. xxv. 41, 42. [f] Matth. xxii. 11.

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The conſequence of *that judgment* is another of thoſe ſubjects which Chriſtians ſhould never forget. It is not *I*, but your Lord and Judge, who tells you what will follow the judgment of the great day:[g]—*The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation.*

You hear, good Chriſtians, how nearly we are all concerned *in this revelation of the different portions of good and bad men in the next world.* My purpoſe is to ſhew you the true way of *profiting* by what you ſhall at any time hear upon theſe ſubjects.

For example: When you hear the deſcription of HELL, and the fearful puniſhment of impenitent ſinners, that "they will be ſent "to a place of torment;[h]—that they muſt "ſuffer the vengeance of eternal fire;[i]—that "their worm never dieth;[k]—that they are to "be tormented for ever and ever; and that "they ſhall ſeek death, but ſhall not find "it."[l]—When you hear theſe amazing truths, do not ſtrive to forget them; do not go about to queſtion them, for they are the declarations of God himſelf; and they are revealed to us as the ſtrongeſt motives to repentance and an holy life, *and that we may never come into that place of torment.* They are deſigned to re-

[g] John v. 28, 29. [h] Luke xvi. 28. [i] Jude 7.
[k] Mark ix. 44. [l] Rev. xx. 10.

ſtrain

ſtrain ſinners from ruining themſelves, and will be found *true*, whether they *believe*, whether they *think* of them, whether they *fear* them, or not. *Woe unto you that laugh now*, ſays our Lord, (that is, that ſtrive to divert the thoughts of the wrath to come) *for ye ſhall mourn and weep.*

'I will therefore,' (will every Chriſtian of ſenſe and ſobriety ſay) 'I will abhor and 'avoid, as I would the devil himſelf, the com-'pany and converſation of thoſe reprobate 'men, who make a jeſt of *ſin*, of *hell*, and of '*eternal torments*. If it be uneaſy to me, and 'I tremble, when I but think of theſe things, 'let me conſider the moſt deplorable condi-'tion of thoſe loſt ſouls, who now feel thoſe 'torments, and who would not be perſuaded 'to think of, and to fear them, when it was 'in their power, through the grace of God, 'to eſcape them.'

But then you will remember, that it is not enough to fear, unleſs your fears have this good effect, to make you fear to offend Him, *who can deſtroy both body and ſoul in that hell*, which you tremble to think of. And remember, likewiſe, that we need not take pains to *go to that place of torment*; our corrupt nature will lead us thither of courſe, if we do not *ſtrive*, if we do not *take pains*, to avoid it.

It is for this reaſon, and not to fright us without cauſe, that the Spirit of God has repreſented the portion of the damned as the greateſt of all evils; that men may be pre-

vailed

vailed on *to work out their ſalvation with fear and trembling*; that is, with a concern anſwerable to the puniſhment they will eſcape by ſo doing.

No Chriſtian, who hears and lays this to heart, will flatter himſelf, that God will not be ſo ſevere as he has threatened. "The very "angels that ſinned," we are aſſured, "are "reſerved in everlaſting chains of darkneſs "unto the judgment of the great day." And ſo *ſure*, as well as *ſevere*, will the puniſhment of ſinners be, that no leſs a ſacrifice than the life of his own Son could prevail with God to accept of their repentance. So that ſuch as do not repent, have nothing to look for but judgment without mercy, as ſure as *this word*, (the Bible) and *that God*, whoſe word it is, *is true*.

Theſe truths, good Chriſtians, you will often hear preſſed upon you, by God in his word, and by his miniſters in their ſermons. Will you not give yourſelves leave to think of them after you leave the church? God forbid. I will tell you what you ſhould do, that you may profit by them. We ſhould, every ſoul of us, reaſon and reſolve thus with himſelf:—

'I will endeavour to keep in my mind a 'dread of thoſe fearful puniſhments, which '(I am aſſured) are to be the portion of thoſe 'who live without fear of what muſt come 'hereafter. I will conſider what my religion 'requires of me, in order to be ſecure from

'theſe

'these threatened evils. And I will also re-
'member who those are, who (as God himself
'hath declared) shall be condemned to hell,
'if they do not repent in time.'

They are such *as know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* "These (saith the Apostle[n]) shall be punished "with everlasting destruction." So that all UNBELIEVERS, and all Christians that live like unbelievers, *fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind; all thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners;*[o] all these, without a timely and sincere repentance, *are to have their portion with devils.*

A man must be wretchedly careless indeed, who can hear this declaration of God himself, and not think of getting out of the way of perdition. And even the best of men will fear for themselves, when they hear our Saviour declare, *That broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many, many there be that are in it.* And all Christians, who give themselves liberty to think of these things, will, when they are tempted to sin, ask themselves some such questions as these:—

'What is it I hazard my soul for? For
'pleasures that I shall soon be sick of; for
'riches that I shall leave in a very short time;
'and for a world that will forget me as soon
'as I am gone. What will it profit me, when
'this pleasure I am so fond of will certainly

[n] 2 Thess. i, 9. [o] 1 Cor. vi.

'be

'be bitterneſs in the end? When this unjuſt 'gain will be followed with the loſs of my 'ſoul? When this tenderneſs of myſelf, 'which will *now* not ſuffer me to mortify my 'corruptions, will be puniſhed with everlaſt-'ing burnings?'

Theſe thoughts, good Chriſtians, if kept in your memory, and pondered in your hearts, will help to preſerve you from ruin, in the midſt of a moſt profligate age—an age in which there are people who neither fear God, nor what he can do to them; who can laugh at damnation, who can wiſh it to themſelves and others without trembling, and who are in the certain way to the lake which burneth with fire and brimſtone, without caring what will become of them. Theſe, Chriſtians ſhould have no fellowſhip with, as they value their own ſouls, as ever they expect the favour of God, as ever they hope for the happineſs of heaven.

The HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN is another of thoſe motives which our gracious God would not let us want, that we may have all the encouragement imaginable to fit ourſelves for that happy ſtate and place. A *place*, as the Spirit of God repreſents it, where there is neither *want*, nor *ſorrow*, nor *ſickneſs*, nor *pain*, nor *oppreſſion*, nor *afflictions*, nor *troubles*, of any kind. But the happineſs of that ſtate no mortal can comprehend: *Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard*, (ſaith St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 9) *neither have entered into the heart of man, the things*

things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

You will not ſure hear theſe things with indifference; or return home without conſidering, over and over again, the happineſs of heaven, and the way to be ſecure of it when you die.

I will endeavour to help your meditations upon this ſubject, and ſhew you how you may and ought to profit by ſuch ſermons. Every Chriſtian ſhould reaſon thus with himſelf:—'I have the ſure word of God for it, that my 'condition when I die will be infinitely happy, 'even beyond what I can imagine, if it is not 'my own fault. At the ſame time, God has 'given me to underſtand, that before I can be 'fit for heaven, my nature muſt be changed; 'that *I muſt love him with all my heart and ſoul*, 'and that, for his ſake, *I muſt love all mankind*, 'otherwiſe I cannot be admitted into that 'bleſſed ſociety. He has alſo ſhewed me the 'way how I may attain theſe holy diſpoſitions, 'which are ſo abſolutely neceſſary to fit me 'for heaven. That in order to love him with 'all my heart, I muſt believe in him, and give 'entire credit to every thing which he has 'made known to us. That I muſt fear him '—fear to do any thing that I believe will 'diſpleaſe him. That I muſt obey him—do 'what he has commanded, and avoid what he 'has forbidden. That I muſt ſubmit to all 'his choices for me, and endeavour that my 'heart may always go along with my lips in

'this

'this petition—THY WILL BE DONE. That 'I muſt give him the honour due unto his 'name; *ſpeak* of him with reverence; *worſhip* 'him with great devotion; *pray* to him for 'what I want; and give him *praiſe* and *thanks* 'for all his mercies. And laſtly, that I muſt 'cloſe with the means of grace which he has 'ordained for my edification, and by which 'he will give me the earneſt of his Holy 'Spirit. By obſerving theſe rules, I ſhall 'come to love God with all my heart, and 'be qualified for that happineſs for which he 'created me.

'In order TO LOVE MY NEIGHBOUR, which 'is another qualification for heaven and hap-'pineſs, I muſt neither do nor wiſh any ill to 'him; I muſt remember, *that whoſoever hateth 'his brother, is a murderer*; *and that no mur-'derer has any inheritance in the kingdom of 'heaven.*[q] *All bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, 'and clamour, and ſtrife, and evil-ſpeaking, and 'malice, muſt* (as the Apoſtle exhorts[r]) *be put 'away from ſuch as hope for the happineſs of 'heaven.* We muſt be both juſt and chari-'table, *ready to give, and glad to diſtribute.* We 'muſt *forgive*, and *give*, as becomes brethren 'and the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt. Theſe 'are the ways by which we are to expreſs, 'and gain, and increaſe, that love for our 'neighbour which muſt qualify us for heaven.

'And in the laſt place, *with regard to my 'own ſelf*, God has made known to me what

[q] 1 John iii. 15. [r] Epheſ. iv 31.

'qualifications

'qualifications are neceſſary *to make me worthy* 'to be partaker of the inheritance with the ſaints 'in heaven. That I muſt be *humble*, for God 'hateth and reſiſteth the proud. I muſt be 'chaſte, for no unclean perſon can enter into 'heaven. I muſt be *temperate* and *ſober*, leſt 'that day overtake me unawares. That as I 'hope to follow my Saviour to heaven, I muſt 'deny myſelf, and take up the croſs; I muſt 'mortify my affections and luſts; keep under 'my body, and bring it into ſubjection; part 'with any thing, as dear as a right-hand or a 'right eye, rather than do what will offend 'God, and ſhut me out of heaven. Laſtly, 'he has commanded me to watch, to walk 'circumſpectly; to keep my heart with all di-'ligence; becauſe I have an adverſary, which, 'like a roaring lion, is continually ſeeking to 'ruin me.

'Theſe things I muſt endeavour to remem-'ber, as I love my ſoul, and as I hope for 'heaven; and I muſt order my life accord-'ingly: for ſo has Chriſt expreſsly told us, '*Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, 'ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he 'that doeth the will of my Father, which is in 'heaven.*'

This, my Chriſtian brethren, is the way we muſt take to profit by ſermons upon theſe important ſubjects. It is thus we muſt endeavour to affect our minds, that we may *remember*, that we may *never forget*, *theſe truths*, which concern us as much as our ſouls are worth.

worth. This being the only way to be ſecure of a bleſſed eternity, to be ever and anon aſking ourſelves ſome ſuch ſhort queſtions as theſe:—

'Why am I afraid of death? Why do I 'put the thoughts of it far from me? Is it 'not becauſe I know that I am not prepared 'to die? Have I conſidered how miſerable I 'ſhall be, if death ſhould ſurpriſe me either 'doing evil, or doing nothing, or doing that 'which was not my duty to do? Is it becauſe 'I fancy that I have time ſufficient before me 'to prepare for death? But then I forget, *that 'a Chriſtian life is the only ſure preparaton for 'death*; and I forget alſo what Jeſus Chriſt 'hath declared, *Thou ſhalt not know what hour 'I will come upon thee.*[s] Is not this the time 'in which I am to chooſe whether I am to be 'miſerable or happy for ever? And ſhall I let 'this time ſlip out of my hands? Do not I 'know that I ſhall come out of the grave juſt 'as I go into it, either fit for heaven, or fit 'for no place but hell? Have not I myſelf 'ſeen many ſurpriſed by death, when they leaſt 'thought of it; and were amazed when they 'ſaw that it was too late to bring forth fruits 'anſwerable to amendment of life? What if 'this uncomfortable caſe ſhould be my own!'

One would aſk further—'What will this 'life I lead end in? Will my great Judge ap-'prove of this way of ſpending my time, my 'eſtate, and the other talents he has entruſted 'me with? Can I hope to hear him ſay,

[s] Rev. iii. 3.

'*Well*

'*Well done, good and faithful ſervant, enter thou* '*into the joy of thy Lord?* Or will not the 'manner of my life oblige him to ſay, *Thou* '*wicked ſervant, thou haſt done nothing that I* '*commanded thee?*—What is it I am loſing my 'inheritance in heaven for? For ſome poor 'pleaſure; for ſome pitiful gain; or to gra- 'tify ſome filthy luſt. Can I imagine, that 'the glorious inheritance of the children of 'God muſt coſt me no pains, no trouble, to 'attain it, when it coſt my Saviour his life 'to purchaſe it for me?

'Laſtly, let me aſk myſelf that queſtion, 'which my Saviour has put into my mouth, '*What ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* 'What pains ought I not to take, rather than 'run the hazard of ſuffering the bitter pains 'of eternal death?'

Let theſe things, Chriſtians, enter deep into your hearts; do not forget them as ſoon as you leave the church; beg of God to give you grace to profit by them. And be aſſured of this, that there is no greater happineſs in this life, than to have reaſonable hopes of a bleſſed eternity: which God grant we may all have, and that we may meet in peace in the paradiſe of God, for the Lord Jeſus' ſake.

To whom, &c.

SERMON

SERMON V.

THE TRUE WAY OF PROFITING BY SERMONS.

LUKE xi. 28.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND KEEP IT.[a]

YOU have here the word of Chriſt for this important truth, That the preaching of the goſpel, the hearing it with attention and zeal, and leading a life anſwerable thereto, is a ſure way to bleſſedneſs or happineſs.

You know the doom of thoſe who heard the ſermons of Chriſt, and would not mind them: *It ſhall* (ſaith our Saviour and Judge) *it ſhall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that people.* By which you ſee, Chriſtians, the great hazard you will run, if you live under the light and ordinances of the goſpel, and are not bettered by them.

Our Saviour himſelf tells you, who it is that tempts you to hear the word with indif-

[a] See Levit. vi. 2; xxv. 14. Prov. iii. 9; xiv. 33; xviii. 3; xix. 17; xxii. 16; xxviii. 20. Pſal. xvii. 14; xxxvii. 2. Iſaiah iii. 15. Zech. vii. 10. Matth. vi. 19, 25. Luke iii. 14; xvi. 9; xix. 8. 1 Cor. vi. 10. Eph. iv. 28; v. 5. Col. iii. 25. 1 Theſſ. iv. 6. 1 Tim. iv. 6; vi. 9, 10, 17. Heb. xiii. 5. 1 Pet. v. 7. 1 John ii. 15.

ference, and to forget what you hear; to deſpiſe the preacher, and the ordinances of God. He tells you, that it is the devil, that taketh the word out of the hearts of thoſe that are not careful to keep it, leſt they ſhould believe and be ſaved.

Laſtly; you may be aſſured of it, that the word preached will become the word of ſalvation to every one that believeth; to every one who comes to hear with a teachable temper of mind, with a ſerious purpoſe and deſire to learn his duty, and with a reſolution to practiſe what he hears.

My deſign in this diſcourſe (as it has been in ſeveral others) is, to ſhew you *how you may beſt profit by the Sermons you hear*; that you may return from the houſe of God with benefit and with a bleſſing.

In order to this, I will propoſe to you ſeveral ſubjects of importance, and ſhew you how every Chriſtian ſhould apply what he hears to himſelf.

But in the firſt place, as ever you hope to profit by what you read or hear, endeavour to diſcharge your heart of a too great fondneſs for the world and its idols.

It is not I, but our Lord himſelf aſſures you, that let the ſeed be never ſo good, yet if it be ſown among thorns, they will choak it at laſt; that is, as he himſelf explains it, *The cares of this world, and the deceitfulneſs of riches, and the luſts of other things, will choak the word, and it will become unfruitful.*[b]

[b] Matth. xiii. 22.

I. A too great fondneſs, therefore, for the things of this world, (or what we call Covetouſneſs) being the greateſt hindrance to piety and Chriſtian knowledge; we will firſt conſider this evil, and the great miſchiefs that attend it.

Take heed, ſaith our Saviour,[c] *and beware of covetouſneſs*. Can we imagine that he would have given Chriſtians this *double*, this *earneſt* caution, but that he knew that there is ſomething in this ſin very deſtructive. And you will be convinced there is, if you will attend to what follows:

Firſt; That no man can poſſibly love God, whoſe heart is ſet upon the world, let him pretend what he will. *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* So ſaith the Spirit of God.[d]

2*dly*. It leads men inſenſibly into atheiſm; that is, to depend more upon themſelves and upon their own induſtry and wealth, than upon *God*, his *providence* and *bleſſing*.

3*dly*. It ſtrangely tempts men to believe that any thing almoſt is lawful, which will but increaſe their ſubſtance.

4*thly*. It moſt ſurpriſingly changeth the hearts and diſpoſitions of men. A compaſſionate man, once poſſeſſed with a ſpirit of covetouſneſs, becomes hard-hearted; a liberal temper becomes ſtingy; and he that was charitable before, now grudges every penny he parts with.

[c] Luke xii. 15. [d] 1 John ii. 15.

It is branded in ſcripture with the name of *Idolatry*, becauſe it tempts men to have ſuch an eſteem for wealth, as if their life and happineſs depended upon having a great deal.

And that which ſtill makes this ſin more hateful to God is this, that it is (what the Spirit of God calls it) *the root of all evil*;[e]—the root of every evil, of injuſtice, of oppreſſion, of extortion, of cheating one another, of thieving, of contention, of law-ſuits, of wiſhing for the death of parents, &c.

In ſhort, it is a damnable ſin; and whoever lives in it is in a ſtate of perdition: and it has this ſad circumſtance attending it, that few can be perſuaded that they are guilty of it, and therefore cannot be perſuaded to repent of it. And yet, no doubt of it, a ſin branded in ſcripture with being *the root of all evil*, muſt of neceſſity be known by ſuch as are guilty of it, if it is not their own fault, that they may be left without excuſe.

Any man, for inſtance, may conclude for certain, that he is under the power of this evil ſpirit, when he is more intent upon the world than in taking care of his ſoul; when his love of gain puts him upon ſuſpicious ways and means of increaſing his ſubſtance, or denying his neighbour his rights. Suſpicious, I mean to himſelf; for even *that* ought to hinder a good man from doing any thing which he *does but fear* may diſpleaſe God, or injure another.

[e] 1 Tim. vi. 10.

To

To proceed:---That perſon is poſſeſſed with a *ſpirit of covetouſneſs*, who has ſuch an opinion and eſteem for wealth, as if it could make him happy. Such a man, ſaith the Prophet,[f] *coveteth an evil covetouſneſs to his houſe, that he may ſet his neſt on high, and be delivered from the power of evil*; that is, that he may depend upon himſelf, be out of the reach of misfortunes, and be independent upon God's providence.

Thirdly; A man may know whether his care and concern for the world does not often make him omit the duties he owes to God and to himſelf, or perform them with indifference and diſtraction; when the time is even grudged in which they are performed; when the Lord's day is profaned by unneceſſary worldly buſineſs, and ſuch buſineſs made uſe of as a pretence for neglecting family duties. When a man ſhews no gratitude to God for the favours he has beſtowed upon him, by doing a proportionable good with them; and when his concern for himſelf makes him unconcerned for thoſe that want his help. When a man's mind is diſtracted with imaginary fears of wanting; or who makes his neceſſities greater than indeed they are, and therefore can never be ſatisfied with his preſent condition. Laſtly; when every diſappointment, every loſs or misfortune, caſts him into trouble, grief, or deſpair, not being permitted to conſider, that it is from God, who orders all things for the beſt:

[f] Hab. ii. 9.

Theſe

Theſe are all inſtances of that covetouſneſs which the ſcripture condemns as leading to perdition. And whoever is, or is in danger of being, poſſeſſed with this ſpirit, (for that ſuch are poſſeſſed with an evil ſpirit, one need no more queſtion, than that Judas was poſſeſſed with ſuch a ſpirit when Satan entered into him) whoever is in this ſad circumſtance, had need to get out of the ſnare of the devil as ſoon as poſſible.

We ſhould now proceed to conſider how this is to be done; but it will be neceſſary to take notice, *firſt*, of what is but too often made uſe of as a cloak for this ſin.

The Apoſtle ſaith, *He that provideth not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of his own houſe, or kindred, hath forfeited the faith, and is worſe than an infidel* [g]

People are apt to think that this will juſtify them, let them be never ſo worldly-minded. When in truth, (and they will find it is ſo, if they will but look into their Bible) the Apoſtle is not directing Chriſtians to provide eſtates for their children, but to take care of their poor relations, and not let others be burthened with them.

We come now to conſider, what uſe a ſerious Chriſtian ſhould make upon hearing the *nature*, the *deceitfulneſs*, the *danger*, and the *end* of this ſin. Now a Chriſtian who deſires to profit by what he hears will think thus with himſelf:—

[g] 1 Tim. v. 8.

I have

'I have heard what the Spirit of God ſaith; 'that *every covetous man, who is an idolater, 'hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God.*[h] 'And ſhall not ſo terrible a truth put a ſtop 'to an over-greedy deſire of getting more than 'I really want? I ſee what my duty is. It 'is to labour in my proper buſineſs, depend- 'ing upon God's bleſſing, without diſquieting 'myſelf with unreaſonable fears of wanting. 'And this I am todo; firſt, in order to ſupply 'my own and the neceſſities of thoſe that be- 'long to me; and then, to ſupply the neceſ- 'ſities of thoſe that are in want. I will not 'let the hurry of buſineſs, therefore, (will 'every ſerious Chriſtian ſay) I will not let 'worldly buſineſs hinder me from ſerving 'God, becauſe I ſerve myſelf moſt when I 'ſerve him. I will endeavour always to re- 'member, that I am in the hands of God, 'who has commanded us *to caſt all our care 'upon him, for he careth for us*;[i]—and who, 'having given us life even before we could 'aſk it, will never let us want the neceſſary 'means of preſerving it. I will beg of God, 'that he will grant me grace to make a good 'uſe of what he ſhall give me, which will 'be a ſure way of obtaining more favours 'from him.

'And ſince the Spirit of God aſſures me, 'that when I do good to others I do moſt 'good to myſelf, I will therefore endeavour 'to make myſelf friends againſt the great day,

[h] Eph. v. 5. [i] 1 Pet. v. 7.

'by

'*by giving alms of ſuch things as I have*, as our 'Lord commands us.[k] And becauſe I cannot 'have a better rule than that which the apoſtle 'has given us,[l] (will every ſerious Chriſtian 'ſay who lives by GAIN) *I will conſtantly lay 'by me in ſtore as God hath proſpered me*, that I 'may have to give to him that needeth. And 'that I may do this more cheerfully, I will 'beg of God to preſerve me from an evil ſpirit 'of covetouſneſs; and *that I may lay up in ſtore 'a good foundation againſt the time to come.*

'In order to this, I will often call to mind 'ſuch ſcriptures as theſe:—*That wealth pro-'fiteth not in the day of wrath*; either when we 'fall into affliction, or when we come to die. '*Thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be required 'of thee: then whoſe ſhall thoſe things be which 'thou haſt provided? So* (ſaith our Lord) *is 'he that layeth up treaſure for himſelf, and is 'not rich towards God*;[m] that is, employing his 'riches to God's glory, or tranſmitting them 'to heaven by the hands of the poor. *Re-'member*, (ſaith Abraham to the rich man) '*that thou in thy life-time receivedſt thy good 'things*, the things in which thou didſt place 'thy very ſoul and happineſs,—*and likewiſe 'Lazarus, evil things; but now he is comforted, 'and thou art tormented.*'[n]

Will any Chriſtian, after this, call thoſe his *good things*, which may be loſt when he leaſt thinks of it; that he cannot keep without

[k] Luke ii. 41. [l] 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

[m] Luke xii. 20, 21. [n] Luke xvi. 25.

fear,

fear, nor part with without vexation; which tempt us to forget God, are a ſnare to us while we live, and may, without a mighty grace, be a curſe to us when we are dead? Rather let us all beg of God to convince us moſt effectually of the vanity of all the idols of this world, which we are but too apt to doat on, and that we may not, like unbelievers, look for happineſs here; and eſpecially that God would keep us from every degree of a ſin, which is the mother of ſo many evils.

II. What thoſe evils are, we now come to take a ſhort view of; that, as we value our ſouls, we may abhor and avoid them.

The firſt we ſhall conſider, is that of *Oppreſſion*. When a man bears hard upon his neighbour, becauſe it is in the power of his hand to do it; or when it is not in the power of his neighbour to contend with him:—or, ſecondly, when a man's neceſſities force him to ſubmit to the very hardeſt terms his neighbour thinks fit to impoſe upon him:—or, thirdly, when a man will take all the advantage of a hard bargain which the law will give him, though it be to the great loſs of his neighbour:—

Theſe, and ſuch as theſe, are very great crimes, and will ſhut men out of heaven, though no law on earth can take hold of thoſe that are guilty of them. And indeed, nobody thinks them ſmall crimes when they themſelves come to be the ſufferers.

Hear

Hear what the Spirit ſaith of theſe ſins:—*He that oppreſſeth the poor, to increaſe his riches, ſhall ſurely come to want.*[o]—*Oppreſs not the poor*;[p] that is, thoſe that are not able to contend with you; *the Lord will plead their cauſe, and ſpoil the ſoul of thoſe that ſpoiled them.* But above all, hear theſe terrible words of God: *Oppreſſors, extortioners, ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God*; and then you know what they muſt inherit.

III. INJUSTICE is another ſin to which a ſpirit of covetouſneſs leads men. I ſhall not take notice of thoſe inſtances of injuſtice which the laws of man may and ought to puniſh, and do the ſufferers right without making it coſt them more than it is worth.

There are other inſtances of injuſtice, as evil in the ſight of God, and as damnable in the end, though people make a ſhift to live in them without public reproach or check of conſcience: ſuch are, *taking advantage* of men's miſtakes, ignorance, ſimplicity, and the like.

I will put you in mind of inſtances of this kind, that you may avoid the ſin and the puniſhment.

If a man is in drink, he is, in the very language of the world, over-ſeen. Now, if in ſuch a condition he happen to fall into bad hands, and make a bargain, it is ten to one but he repents when he is ſober, and too often his family ſmart for it. Shall I go about to prove, that it is a ſin to inſiſt upon ſuch a

[o] Prov. xxii. 16, 23. [p] Zech. vii. 10.

bargain?

bargain? Every man who has a conſcience knows it to be ſo; but perhaps every body does not remember what GOD has expreſsly declared,[q] *That he will be the avenger of all ſuch as go beyond or defraud another in any matter.*

How eaſily may a poor man, who has a righteous cauſe, miſtake or be unable to defend it: but will his overſight or inability give me or you a right to that, to which in truth we had no juſt title; or will the judgment of a court leſſen the injuſtice, when it comes to be tried at the great day?

To feed a man with money when I know he has no real occaſion, only that I may get a bargain of his eſtate when he ſhall be forced to ſell it; this is thought to be no great crime; and yet it is plain I help to ruin him, and perhaps his family; and if he ſins in ſquandering the inheritance of his forefathers, is it poſſible for me to be without guilt?

Becauſe, in wronging *orphans* and *widows*, and *poor people*, a man has leſs powerful people to deal with, is he therefore leſs wicked? No, ſure; ſo far from it, that God has declared himſelf concerned in ſuch cauſes:—*Their Redeemer* (ſaith Solomon[r]) *is mighty; he ſhall plead their cauſe with thee.*

How often do wills and writings of moment, and even other things of value, fall into the hands of perſons to whom they do not belong! The ſin of concealing ſuch things is looked upon as a leſs ſin than ſtealing: for no

[q] 1 Theſſ. iv. 6. [r] Prov. xxiii. 11.

reaſon,

reaſon, I am ſure, but becauſe in one caſe he may be in danger of being hanged, if he is caught; and in the other he will only be called a diſhoneſt man, which ſuch a man will not lay much to heart. But Chriſtians ſhould conſider, that the judgment of a righteous God will not be according to the fooliſh opinion of men.

It is too common for people to conceal and keep what they have found. Such people do not ſure know, that there is an expreſs law of God[s] againſt ſuch practices; nor do they ever think how they ſhall anſwer it at the great day of accounts.

If a man will take all advantages which the law will give him, he will very often do great injuſtice in the ſight of God, and make himſelf liable to *reſtitution*, without which his repentance and ſalvation will be very hazardous. And indeed a man muſt love the world exceeding well, even better than his own ſoul, who will put his neighbour to trouble, grief, and expence, to ſeek for his rights in equity, when he knows beforehand that in equity he will and ought to be relieved.

But the ſins of fraud and injuſtice which are moſt common and leaſt taken notice of, are ſuch as are committed in the way of trade and bargains. The Wiſe Man has given all people fair warning of this:[t] *As a nail ſticketh faſt between the joinings of the ſtones, ſo doth ſin ſtick cloſe between buying and ſelling.* Every

[s] Levit. vi. [t] Eccluſ: xxvii. 2.

Chriſtian,

Chriſtian, therefore, who deſires to keep a good conſcience, will be glad to have ſuch rules to walk by, as he needs not be deceived, unleſs he be willing to be deceived. Such is that of our Saviour's:[u] *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the law and the prophets.* Which, though a general rule, may by a well-meaning Chriſtian be applied to all our dealings one with another; while thoſe that are reſolved to be rich, whatever ſhall be the conſequence, all the rules of the goſpel, though never ſo well explained, will be of little uſe to them. But for ſuch as do really make a conſcience of their ways, one would endeavour to make their way plain and ſafe.

Now; Gain being the great and juſt end of trade, of which every man for himſelf muſt be judge, and conſequently too apt to be favourable to his own intereſt, I ſhall therefore recommend one very plain rule, which will go a great way towards directing every conſcientious man of buſineſs, how to act ſafely with regard to gain. And this is,—*to take ſuch a gain, advantage, or conſideration, as the perſon with whom I deal would be ſatisfied with, if he knew my buſineſs as well as I do myſelf, and the reaſons which oblige me to take ſuch a profit.* Whoever makes this his rule, his conſcience will never reproach him of injuſtice. But if, inſtead of doing ſo, men will take all that they can get; make a hand of the ignorance, ne-

[u] Matth. vii. 12.

ceſſities,

ceſſities, or ſimplicity, of thoſe with whom they deal; they do what they muſt know to be unjuſt, and make themſelves liable to one of the moſt difficult duties of Chriſtianity, and that is, RESTITUTION, without which their repentance will not be accepted of God.

But before we come to conſider this duty of reſtitution, I would add a few words concerning the now common, but ſcandalous crimes of *pilfering* and *ſtealing*.

I am very ſenſible, that few of thoſe who have fallen into theſe baſe bewitching ſins, will mind what can be ſaid from the pulpit or from the word of God. The Spirit of God ſaith indeed,[x] that *a curſe or evil ſpirit entereth into the houſe of the chief, to conſume it with the timber and ſtones.* But what will this ſignify to thoſe that have neither faith, nor religion, nor ſhame, nor fear?

But it will not, one would hope, be in vain to adviſe thoſe who are not yet arrived to this height of ſinning, to repent and leave it in time; for be aſſured of it, that when a ſpirit of pilfering has once taken poſſeſſion of a man, it will, if not reſiſted, lead him to every degree of that ſin, till it brings him to ruin both of ſoul and body; and that it will be as difficult for him, whatever his condition in the world afterwards may be, to break off an habit of ſtealing, as it is for a drunkard, or a whoremaſter, or a common ſwearer, to lerve off thoſe vices that are become a ſecond nature to them.

[x] Zech. v. 4.

How

How exceedingly careful, therefore, ſhould parents be to diſcourage every the leaſt degree of this ſin, every ſhadow of it; to warn their children, over and over again, againſt ſo baſe, ſo ſcandalous a vice, which is ſo hard to be forſaken, ſo hard to be repented of. For *reſtitution* muſt be made for all the ſins we have been ſpeaking of, as ever men hope for ſalvation, at leaſt in the ſincere endeavour.

I will no more go about to prove that *reſtitution is a neceſſary duty*, than I would take pains to perſuade you that *robbing is a ſin*. Every man's conſcience, every man who dare aſk his conſcience, muſt tell him ſo. And if any man is eaſy under the guilt of this ſin, he will be eaſy under the guilt of any other ſin. For ſure the ſame reaſon and juſtice, which oblige me to reſtore what I have borrowed, will oblige me to make reſtitution for what I have wronged a man of. This being a certain truth, that all a man gets wrongfully is theft and robbery, and no better.

Therefore, delay not, Chriſtians, at the peril of your ſouls, to make ſatisfaction for any injuſtice or wrong you have done, while it is in your power. And if any ſcruple ariſe in your breaſt concerning the way of doing it, go to your paſtor, or to ſome perſon of judgment and diſcretion, who may be able to ſilence your doubts, and quiet your conſcience.

Without doing this, a man of any thought can have no comfort either living or dying. *This day*, (ſaith our Saviour[y] to Zaccheus) *this*

[y] Luke xix. 8.

day

day is ſalvation come to thy houſe. So that until he had ſincerely reſolved to make reſtitution, he was not in a ſtate of ſalvation, he was in a ſtate of perdition,

The law of God to the Iſraelites[z] is ſo particular upon this head, that I muſt repeat it to you. *If a ſoul ſin, and commit a treſpaſs againſt the Lord, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowſhip, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour, or hath found that which was loſt, and lieth concerning it; he ſhall reſtore it in the principal, and add a fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth. And then the prieſt ſhall receive his treſpaſs-offering, and make an atonement for him, and it ſhall be forgiven him.* And pray take notice, that this command did not concern ſuch as were convicted of theſe crimes of injuſtice before a magiſtrate, but ſuch whoſe own conſciences accuſed them, and who deſired peace and pardon from God.

This was the way preſcribed by God himſelf. This is the voice of the Law and the Goſpel; and, let me add, of natural reaſon: for every body who has been wronged expects ſatisfaction; and, if he be denied it by men, is apt to appeal to God for juſtice and vengeance. So that the moſt ignorant know their duty in this caſe, and if they are loath to make reſtitution, it is becauſe the fear of God is not in their hearts. They will venture their ſouls rather than part with what they have got.

[z] Lev. vi. 2, &c.

Chriſtians

Chriſtians, therefore, who wiſh well to themſelves, and are convinced of the abſolute neceſſity of this duty, will think beforehand, when they are tempted to any of the ſins we have been ſpeaking of—they will think what a bitter cup they are preparing for themſelves, if they give way to ſuch temptations.

Chriſtians would do well to conſider, how it was with Judas when his conſcience was awake: he valued the thirty pieces of ſilver no more than the very earth he trod upon; he flung them away; he confeſſed his injuſtice before the world; and would have given the world, if he had had it, to have had it in his power to have undone what he had been guilty of. And ſurely this will be the caſe of every one, either now or hereafter, who knows he has done wrong, and will not be perſuaded to make timely ſatisfaction.

On the other hand, a Chriſtian who reſolves to do his duty in this inſtance to the beſt of his power, (for God expects no more) by doing ſo, he gives glory to God; he acknowledges the juſtice of his laws, the power he has to puniſh offenders, his mercy in accepting the repentance of ſinners upon the moſt equitable conditions; he ſhews that he fears God, and that he values the favour of God more than his own profit or his own reputation; and has the ſureſt proof and comfort, that his repentance is ſincere, and his ſins forgiven.

I ſhall

I ſhall conclude this article of reſtitution with the words of that excellent godly divine, Biſhop Beveridge: "All perſons that ever "wronged any man of any thing, are bound "to make reſtitution. All that by forging, "or concealing of deeds, or tampering with "witneſſes, have got poſſeſſion of other men's "eſtates. All that by robbing, or any kind "of theft, have ſtolen what was their neigh-"bour's. All ſervants and apprentices, who "neglect their maſter's buſineſs, embezzle or "purloin his goods. All that by falſe mea-"ſures or weights impoſe upon their cuſtom-"ers. All that conceal the faults of the goods "they ſell. All that cheat or overreach thoſe "they deal with. All that by any wicked "artifice defraud their creditors of what is "their due. All that by ſmuggling of goods, "forſwearing themſelves, or bribing of others, "withhold from the King any part of his "cuſtoms or other revenues, which the laws "of God and of the land have given him a "juſt right to. In ſhort, all that have been "either principals or acceſſaries in wronging "any man of any thing, they are bound to "make full reſtitution." Thus far that good man.

Now every ſerious Chriſtian, who hears theſe things and lays them to heart, will reaſon and reſolve with himſelf after ſome ſuch way as this:—

'I ſee plainly that I muſt not judge of the 'greatneſs of the ſins of injuſtice and fraud

'by

'by the opinion and way of the world, but 'by the authority of God who has forbidden 'them, by the puniſhments he has threatened, 'and by the miſchiefs that attend them. Such 'ſins, being committed without remorſe, are 'too often forgotten; and it is to be feared, 'are too ſeldom repented of. I will not 'therefore let the love of the world poſſeſs my 'ſoul, leſt it choke the ſeed of God's word 'ſown in my heart, and thoſe truths which 'ſhould keep me from ruin. Such as theſe: '*He that haſteth to be rich, can hardly be innocent.*[a] 'That all depends upon the bleſſing of God, 'which cannot be hoped for in unrighteous 'ways. That every man living has a right to 'be dealt with fairly and with juſtice. That 'neither life nor happineſs conſiſteth in the 'abundance any man poſſeſſeth. That it will 'be no advantage to a man to have doubled 'his talents, if at the ſame time he has dou-'bled his guilt. That poſterity will feel the 'effects of my injuſtice; God having de-'clared,[b] *that he will lay up the iniquities of 'ſinners for their children.* And laſtly, *that 'there is nothing that a man can get in exchange 'for his ſoul.*'

Theſe conſiderations I will dwell upon, will every ſerious Chriſtian ſay, when he has heard them from the pulpit, or from God's word. And may this be the reſolution of every ſoul who has now heard theſe things, and attended to them! In order to this, I

[a] Prov. xxviii. 20. [b] Job xx. 28.

will

will leave a few things with you to be remembered.

Suppoſe, for example, you ſhould ſee one of your poor neighbours wronged, or deprived of his juſt rights or goods, by robbery, by oppreſſion, or by fraud. To ſee a whole family in trouble; their minds uneaſy; their health and reſt broken; their neceſſary buſineſs neglected; tempted to murmur againſt God; and to curſe ſuch as have been the occaſion of their trouble. Let, I ſay, any body who has the leaſt ſpark of humanity, grace, or goodneſs, ſee this; and ſay, whether this will not make him abhor, and reſolve againſt, every inſtance of injuſtice, violence, and fraud, which muſt of neceſſity give his neighbour ſo much ſorrow and grief of heart.

If this does not affect every one that ſees or hears of it, (for there may be ſome people ſo deſtitute of humanity and grace, that provided they be eaſy, and can get or keep what they have gotten, are not much concerned for the ſufferings of others.) Let us ſuppoſe we ſaw ſuch a man upon his death-bed; his eyes open, his conſcience awake, and calling to mind the evil he has done his neighbour, whether by *cunning*, *power*, *violence*, or *fraud*; dreading the conſequence; not knowing how to make ſatisfaction for the injuries he has done; aſhamed to own his crimes, and yet not able to bear the thoughts of them; juſt going to leave the world under the greateſt uncertainties of what is like to be his portion in a very

very few hours perhaps. Can there be a caſe, a condition, more terrible, more miſerable, than this? And yet how many are there, who in all human appearance leave the world under theſe moſt aſtoniſhing circumſtances!

Laſtly; Suppoſe people ſhould be ſo thoughtleſs, ſo ſtupid, ſo ignorant, as to die without remorſe, or fear; is their caſe any better than that of thoſe who die under the fear of God's diſpleaſure? Can it be imagined, that their ignorance or unconcernedneſs will alter the decrees of God, who has expreſsly declared, that they that have done evil, and have not repented, *ſhall go into everlaſting fire?* This ſhould hinder Chriſtians from doing to others what they would not have done to themſelves.

THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF—with ſuch a love as worketh no ill to his neighbour. Believe it, Chriſtians, *mine* and *your* ſalvation depends upon the obſervation of this command of God.

I pray God we may remember it; and pardon us whenever through frailty we are wanting to our duty, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON VI.

THE TRUE WAY OF PROFITING BY THE PUBLICK WORSHIP.

VOUCHSAFE, O God, to direct me, and to bleſs this diſcourſe to the benefit of my flock, and to all ſuch as ſhall hear it; that they may glorify Thee for the truths they ſhall learn, and for the bleſſings they ſhall receive by my miniſtry; through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

1 COR. XIV. 15.

I WILL PRAY WITH THE UNDERSTANDING.[a]

WHEN one ſees Chriſtians coming conſtantly to church, without any viſible benefit; without becoming more ſerious and devout at their prayers, or more regular in their lives; one cannot but conclude, either that they never aſk thoſe graces which they want, or that "they aſk and have not, be-"cauſe they aſk amiſs."

This is certain, that there is not any one grace, not one good thing, which either in duty, intereſt, or charity, we are bound to pray for, but what our Church has provided

[a] See Iſaiah i. 15; xxix. 13. Ezek. xxxiii. 31. Matth. xv. 8. Eph. vi. 7, 8, 9. 1 Tim. v. 8.

us proper prayers by which to aſk them: and it is as certain, that God will hear us, and grant our petitions, *whenever we aſk any thing according to his will.*[b]

There muſt therefore be ſome very great fault, when the generality of Chriſtians (to the great ſcandal of the religion they profeſs) do, all their life long, pray for graces and bleſſings which they never obtain. They muſt have been either ignorantly, or careleſsly, or wilfully, wanting to themſelves, when they return ſo often from the houſe of God without benefit, and without a bleſſing; when it is moſt certain, that God deſigned theſe ſolemn meetings as the greateſt of bleſſings, —as the beſt opportunity of fitting ourſelves for heaven and happineſs.

We will therefore conſider, what may be the real cauſe of ſo great unfruitfulneſs under ſuch powerful ordinances, and means of grace and ſalvation.

In the firſt place, then, it is but too plain, that very many come to church merely out of cuſtom; many only to avoid the reproach of having no religion; and moſt of all do not conſider what they come to church for, what they want, what they pray for. And ſo it comes to paſs, that Chriſtians confeſs their ſins, without being ſenſible of the danger of being ſinners. They hear the moſt gracious terms of pardon declared, and the abſolution pronounced, without receiving the comfort

[b] 1 John v. 14.

and

and benefit thereof. They repeat the moſt divine and powerful prayer of our Lord, without conſidering the majeſty of him to whom they ſpeak, or his wonderful goodneſs in permitting them to come to him as to a father. They repeat his praiſes in the pſalms and hymns without any true devotion; and they hear his word, his commands, his promiſes, and his judgments, without being moved by them to mend their lives.

In ſhort, they ſolemnly profeſs their faith in God; they aſk of him all neceſſary graces and bleſſings; they ſay *amen* to prayers which they have never attended to; and hear a bleſſing pronounced by the miniſter of God, to which God has annexed an eſpecial grace and bleſſing: and after all this, too often return home without any benefit, without a bleſſing.

Our Saviour Chriſt will give you the true reaſon of this;—*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*[c] This was the caſe of the Jews before their final deſtruction. Let us take care that this be not our caſe and our fate.

To prevent this, I will ſet before you *the true way of profiting by the publick worſhip of God*; and what every devout Chriſtian, who hopes for God's bleſſing, ſhould endeavour to do, in order to obtain it.

He ſhould, in the firſt place, endeavour (when he is about to go to worſhip God) he

[c] Matth. xv. 7.

ſhould

ſhould endeavour to poſſeſs his heart with a true ſenſe of his ſad condition without the grace of God. This is by the Spirit of God moſt lively repreſented in theſe words: *Thou ſayeſt, I have need of nothing; and knoweſt not, that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*[d]

This is your, and mine, and every man's ſad condition by nature, and deſtitute of the grace of God. We are wretched and miſerable ſinners; and unleſs God pardon us, we are for ever undone. We are poor and weak creatures, in danger (as Job was) of being ruined by our adverſary the devil. We are blind, and in the dark, as to every thing relating to our happineſs or miſery. And we are naked, and deſtitute of every virtue that might recommend us to the favour of God.

Theſe are the thoughts which we ſhould take along with us to the houſe of God; and we ſhould conſider what we are going thither for; namely, to beg of God to pardon and forgive us our ſins; to give God thanks for the mercies and favours which he has vouchſafed us; to learn how we may live ſo as to pleaſe God, to make a publick and open profeſſion of our faith; and to aſk ſuch things as are needful both for our ſouls and bodies. This is truly to pray with the underſtanding.

Now; every Chriſtian, who has theſe things in his mind and at heart, will, when he goes to church, be very ſerious; endeavour to lay

[d] Rev. iii. 17.

aſide

aſide all worldly thoughts; and will beg of God to diſpoſe and aſſiſt him in the work he is going about. And it is for this reaſon that all well-taught Chriſtians do fall upon their knees as ſoon as they come into the church, and pray to God to prevent them by his grace and Spirit. And that the moſt unlearned Chriſtian may not want words, the Church has provided a moſt excellent prayer, to be made uſe of before we begin any work of moment; and which all Chriſtians may learn, being ſo often repeated in the publick ſervice, as follows: *Prevent us, O Lord, in all doings, with thy moſt gracious favour, &c.*

And here let me give you, and beg you to remember, one moſt excellent rule of a Chriſtian life,—never to undertake any buſineſs without praying to God, in this or ſome ſuch prayer, to prevent and proſper you. Whoever conſcientiouſly obſerves this rule will be hindered from doing many things which the world counts innocent, and which muſt afterwards be repented of. For who *can*, why *dare*, ſay this prayer, and beg of God to prevent him with his gracious favour, and further him with his help, when he is going to do a thing which he knows, or ſuſpects, either to be unjuſt, unfit for a Chriſtian man to do, or diſpleaſing to God?

Let us now return to the conſideration of the Publick Worſhip. And I muſt repeat it again, and beſeech you to remember it, that the only way to have your perſons and your prayers

prayers accepted, is to come before God with an *humble*, *penitent*, and *obedient heart*. It is for this reaſon you are put in mind, *that a broken and contrite heart God will not deſpiſe*. And you have a convincing proof of this, in the perſon of the publican, mentioned by our Saviour; who, out of a deep ſenſe of his ſins and unworthineſs, *durſt not lift up his eyes unto heaven, but ſmote upon his breast, ſaying, God be merciful unto me a ſinner*. Which holy indignation, and condemning himſelf after ſo penitent a manner, procured for him the pardon of his ſins; the very greateſt bleſſing *he* could, or *we* can, aſk or obtain of God.

On the other hand; if we preſent ourſelves before God, after a careleſs, indecent manner, with a vain confidence and ſatisfaction that we are not as great ſinners as ſome others, our very prayers will be turned into ſin, and we ſhall leave the church without a pardon, and without a bleſſing. To prevent this, when you hear the *ſentences* read with which the publick ſervice begins, attend to them with ſerioufneſs; and, in order to ſtir up your devotion, apply them to yourſelf in ſome ſuch ſhort prayers as theſe following:

For example: If this ſentence ſhall be read, "When the wicked man turneth away from "his wickedneſs," &c. ſay ſecretly to yourſelf; *Turn thou me, O good Lord, and ſo ſhall I be turned.* Or if this ſentence ſhall be read, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and "forgiveneſſes," &c. you may ſay in your heart,

heart, *It is of the Lord's mercies that my ſins have not been my ruin.* Or ſuppoſe this ſentence has been read; " The ſacrifices of God " are a broken ſpirit; a broken and a con- " trite heart," &c. you may ſay in your heart, *But most unfit is mine to be to God preſented, until I have obtained his pardon for the many ſins by which it has been defiled.* Or if this ſentence ſhall be read; " Turn unto the Lord your " God, for he is gracious and merciful, ſlow " to anger," &c. ſay ſecretly, *God grant that I may never abuſe this goodneſs and patience of God, which is deſigned to lead me to repentance.* While this ſentence is reading; " I will ariſe " and go to my father, and will ſay unto " him, Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, " and before thee," &c. think with yourſelf with what an humble, penitent heart this poor prodigal ſaid theſe words, and endeavour to poſſeſs your own heart with the ſame devout affections. Laſtly, when this ſentence ſhall be read; " If we ſay that we have no ſin, " we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not " in us," &c. a devout and penitent ſoul will pour out ſome ſuch ſecret ejaculation as this: *The very beſt of men have need of mercy and pardon; how much more ſuch a miſerable ſinner as I am!—'I will acknowledge my ſin unto God, 'and mine iniquities will I not hide.'*

By this method, you will keep your mind intent upon the great work you are about; you will go through the whole ſervice with devotion; *you will pray with the underſtanding:*

ing: and you will accuſtom yourſelf to apply every ſcripture to your own caſe.

But be ſure you take this conſideration along with you; and I beſeech you to remember it as long as you live; *That you are not going to make your addreſs to God for yourſelf only, but for every Chriſtian in the whole world.* For, as we are all members of that body of which Jeſus Chriſt is the head, we are every one of us bound (as we hope to meet in heaven) to pray for, and to do good to every member of that body: think ſeriouſly of this, and it will quicken your charity, and mightily ſtir up your devotion, when you conſider that you are going to pray for millions of millions of Chriſtians, and that millions of Chriſtians are praying for you; and that, as you ſincerely pray for others, God will moſt ſurely hear their prayers for you. And then, with what ſatisfaction and comfort will you leave the church, when you conſider that you have been a real benefactor to an infinite number of miſerable Chriſtians:—by praying for all that are in error, or want the neceſſary means of inſtruction; for all that labour under trials and afflictions: for all that are in pain of body or anguiſh of mind; for all that are in ſlavery, under perſecution, in poverty, or in priſon; for all that are under temptations, or in danger of falling into deſpair; and laſtly, for all ſick and dying perſons.

Beſides this, you have had an opportunity of ſhewing your gratitude, by praying, and praiſing

praiſing God for all your benefactors; as alſo of ſhewing your charity, by praying for your enemies; and laſtly, of begging graces and bleſſings for all your friends and relations, and for all that have deſired your prayers.

If any conſiderations will make a Chriſtian ſerious and devout at his prayers, ſurely theſe will:—That he is doing a work the moſt pleaſing to God; that he is going to do himſelf, and all his fellow Chriſtians, the greateſt good that can be thought of.

Well then, with theſe diſpoſitions and with theſe views, you begin your prayers *in an* HUMBLE CONFESSION *of your own ſins and the ſins of all others*; without which none of our prayers will be accepted; (for a ſinner can make no prayer that will be heard, but for the grace of converſion only.)

When the congregation are making this confeſſion to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon their knees; if there be any ſo ill taught, or ſo ignorant of their duty, as wilfully to refuſe to put themſelves into this humble poſture, one may, without any breach of charity, conclude—*that man* does not know himſelf to be a miſerable ſinner; or he does not conſider, that his prayers will be rejected; or he does not believe, that hell-fire will one day be the portion of unpardoned ſinners: if he did, he would think no poſture too painful by which he might obtain God's pardon and bleſſing.

To proceed:—After this confeſſion, follows THE ABSOLUTION; not to be repeated by you, but by the miniſter of God only; and in the name, and by the authority, of God.

Ignorant people may ſuggeſt, that we take upon us to *pardon ſins*, which we acknowledge NONE BUT GOD CAN DO. But ſurely God can ſend *his* pardon, as well as a king can ſend his, by what hands he thinks fit. And if *he has committed this miniſtry of reconciliation to his own miniſters*, (as St. Paul aſſures us[e] he has done) who will be ſo perverſe as to refuſe ſo great a mercy, though it comes through the hands of a man like themſelves?

Pray remember the behaviour of no leſs a man than king David; who thought himſelf happy that he could receive abſolution by the mouth of his ſubject Nathan; who, upon his confeſſion, declared, *God hath put away thy ſin, thou ſhalt not die.*[f]

God beſtows his bleſſings of pardon and peace according to his own appointment. He has appointed his miniſters to baptize you for the remiſſion of ſins: and in order to aſſure to you the pardon of your ſins, they are ordained to adminiſter to you the other holy ſacrament.

Jeſus Chriſt impowered his miniſters not only to pray for, but to give with effect, the bleſſings of peace and happineſs, which none but God can give, to every ſon of peace, that is, to every perſon qualified to receive ſuch a

[e] 2 Cor. v. 18. [f] 2 Sam. xii. 13.

bleſſing.

bleſſing.[f] Even ſo every Chriſtian, duly qualified by true repentance and faith unfeigned, may have the comfort of hearing his pardon pronounced by God's own ambaſſador, purſuant to Chriſt's own power and authority.

But that God may render this pardon, by the mouth of his miniſter, more effectual, every true penitent would do well to receive and apply it to himſelf in ſome ſuch ſecret prayer as this following:—*May this pardon, O Lord, fall upon my ſoul, and ſeal the forgiveneſs of all my ſins!* This one would recommend again and again to every devout Chriſtian, as what would be attended with the greateſt comfort and aſſurance of his pardon being ſealed in heaven.

The next thing which we are directed to do, is to addreſs our Heavenly Father in a *prayer appointed by the Son of God himſelf.* This conſideration ſhould oblige us always to ſay this prayer with the greateſt attention, deliberation, devotion, and zeal; that God may hear us according to the full importance of this moſt comprehenſive prayer.

And now we are qualified to praiſe God, and to give him thanks for all his mercies; which we are to do in the following *pſalms* and *hymns.* And pray take notice, that the pſalms are appointed to be read over no leſs than twelve times in every year, for this great and good reaſon; that we may learn (by hearing and repeating them ſo often) to pray to,

[f] Luke x. 6.

and praiſe God, in the very words or expreſſions of the Holy Ghoſt, which, to be ſure, will always be moſt acceptable to the Divine Majeſty.

Then follows a leſſon out of the OLD TESTAMENT. The Old Teſtament was written in order to eſtabliſh *the great article of a divine providence*; and to give men right notions of God's glorious perfections, of his almighty power, his infinite wiſdom, his juſtice, goodneſs, and truth.

When the miniſter ſaith, Here beginneth the leſſon; ſay in your heart, God is going to ſpeak to me; ſhall I not vouchſafe to hear him with attention? God grant that I may hear, and underſtand, and bring forth fruit an hundred fold!

It is in theſe books, that we have an account of what has happened from the creation to the coming of Chriſt, and particularly of the two ſtates of man, his *innocency* and his *fall*. That God having made man, he promiſed to make him happy for ever, if he would be obedient to his commands: but man failing in this forfeited all his right to eternal happineſs, and became ſubject to ſin and to death. That to convince us of his infinite goodneſs, love, and mercy, from the moment man fell, God promiſed a Redeemer, for whoſe ſake his repentance ſhould be accepted, on condition he would live according to that light and reaſon which God had given him.

After

After this, men, abuſing their reaſon, and falling into idolatry, God gave them, by his ſervant Moſes, written laws to walk by; and from time to time raiſed up prophets, either to explain the true meaning of thoſe laws, or to foreſhew what would be the ſad conſequence of their perſiſting to provoke God by their wicked lives.

And to convince men of his infinite *juſtice*, and *hatred of ſin*, it appears in theſe books, that he has puniſhed ſinners in all ages, without reſpect of perſons; once in the deſtruction of the whole world, except eight perſons; at another time, by fire and brimſtone from heaven; and by infinite other ſore judgments, by the *ſword*, *famines*, *peſtilence*, and *perſecutions*.

All theſe things were written for our inſtruction; that we may profit by hearing them read; and that we may learn to fear, and love, and obey, this great and good God, who can make us infinitely happy or miſerable beyond expreſſion.

Remember therefore, I beſeech you, our Saviour's words: *If they hear not* (if they mind not) *Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead.* So dreadful is the conſequence of not attending to the word of God when read in the church.

After this follows *one of the moſt devout hymns of praiſe* that ever was made by man, to the praiſe of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, to whom you were dedicated in

baptiſm; beginning with theſe words:—"We "praiſe Thee, O God," &c.

That you may join with the church with greater devotion, remember what God hath declared; *They that honour me, I will alſo honour.*

Then will be read the ſecond leſſon out of the NEW TESTAMENT. In attending to what you hear out of the New Teſtament, you will be convinced, that it was one and the ſame Spirit which was the author of both the Old and New.

Prepare yourſelf to hear the hiſtory of Chriſt Jeſus your Saviour, and the manner of your redemption, as truths on which your ſalvation depends. Our Saviour himſelf gives us warning what will follow, if we do not mind theſe things: *It ſhall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for people who have an opportunity of hearing the word of God, and deſpiſe it.*

Here you have the terms of your ſalvation, and the example of your Saviour, ſet before you. Here you have an account of the Son of God, the promiſed Redeemer, taking our nature upon him; inſtructing us what we muſt believe, and what we muſt do, to be ſaved; ſuffering what our ſins had deſerved; ſatisfying the juſtice, and reſtoring us to the favour of God.

And that no man, no, not the moſt unlearned Chriſtian, may be diſcouraged from reading and hearing the ſcriptures, our Lord gives God thanks,[g] for that he reveals theſe truths,

[g] Matth. xi. 25.

truths, and makes them eaſy to the humble, obedient, and willing Chriſtian. And indeed the goſpel does not only teach Chriſtians their duty, but alſo inſpires them with grace to underſtand, and power to perform it.[h]

That therefore you may profit by the word of God, remember and obſerve theſe two rules:—Firſt; apply what you hear as ſpoken to yourſelf; this *command*, this *promiſe*, this *threatening*, this *reproof*, this *direction*, this *warning*, I will take to myſelf. And, 2dly, fail not to beg of God, at the end of every leſſon, that he may enable you to underſtand, and love, and obey his holy word.

In this word are contained all the articles of your Chriſtian faith; which, that we may remember them the better, are all ſummed up in the APOSTLES' CREED, which ought to be repeated with great deliberation. And if every one would ſecretly beg of God, in the words of the apoſtles,[i] *Lord, increaſe my faith*, at the end of the creed; God would moſt ſurely increaſe his faith, and it would become a ſure ſhield againſt the aſſaults of the devil.

After this we proceed to make our prayers and ſupplications to God for the graces and bleſſings we ſtand in need of. For kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives:—for the miniſters of God, who ſhew unto you the way of ſalvation; and to whom the word of reconciliation, and of life eternal, is committed:—and

[h] John vi. 63. [i] Luke xvii. 5.

laſtly,

laſtly, for all eſtates and conditions of men; that our charity may render our prayers more acceptable to God.

The LITANY is a part of our ſervice, which will be attended to, and joined in, by every devout Chriſtian, who fears the judgments of God, or fears for himſelf.

And pray do not think that thoſe often-repeated words, LET US PRAY, are ſaid without reaſon. Every one knows for himſelf, how very apt our minds are to wander in prayer: and theſe words are deſigned, and ſhould always put us in mind, *to whom we are ſpeaking*, that our thoughts may go along with our lips, when we ſpeak to HIM who knows our hearts.

You cannot but obſerve, that we conclude all our prayers with ſome ſuch expreſſiion as this—*through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour*; that we may ever remember, that it is for his ſake, and for what he has done and ſuffered for us, that God gives us any thing we pray for.

When the miniſter goes to the altar, prepare to hear, with the greateſt attention, the *commandments of God*, which at your baptiſm you vowed to keep all the days of your life. As often as theſe are read; you have an opportunity of ſeeing wherein you have offended againſt any of theſe commands, and of begging God's pardon for what is paſt, and his grace to obſerve them better for the time to come, in theſe moſt affecting words, which the church has provided, *Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law*; which

which ſhould never be hurried over, but ſaid with the greateſt devotion.

When the EPISTLE and GOSPEL are read, and you remember that they are portions of ſacred ſcripture, taken out of the book of your ſalvation, you will hear them with the greater attention.

Sometimes you will hear the moſt inſtructive ſermons or parables of Chriſt; at other times you will hear the miracles he wrought for the confirmation of our faith.

And, to encourage us to follow his bleſſed example of patience, humility, ſubmiſſion to the will of God, and diſregard for this world, we have ſet forth, in the *goſpel*, his moſt ſure promiſe of grace and conſolation while we live, and of happineſs eternal when we die.

And to hinder us from growing ſecure and careleſs, we ſhall often and often hear in theſe goſpels the dreadful doom which unconverted, hardened, and impertinent ſinners ſhall ſurely meet with in the next world.

At certain ſolemn ſeaſons, you have a particular account of what Jeſus Chriſt has done and ſuffered for our redemption and ſalvation, that we may never forget his love.

And in the ſeveral *Epiſtles*, you will hear, every man his duty very particularly ſet down, in the words not of man, but (as they are indeed) the words of God.

And ſome part or other of this word you will hear every Lord's day explained in the Sermon, and preſſed upon you, in order to enlighten

enlighten the minds of the ignorant, to awaken the conſciences of the careleſs and profane, and ſuch as hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs. But then, as you hope to profit by ſermons, you muſt come to church with an humble and teachable temper; ſubmitting to receive inſtruction, reproof, and advice, from the perſon whom the providence of God has ſet over you.

If the SACRAMENT of the *Lord's Supper* is to be adminiſtered, and you lightly turn your back upon that holy ordinance, you muſt not expect that God will hear any of the prayers that you have made. *Do this in remembrance of me*, were the dying words of Jeſus Chriſt. You refuſe to obey this command, (for ſuch in truth it is) and yet hope that God, for his ſake, will hear you when you call upon him.

Do not deceive yourſelf. It is by this ſacrament, that the ſubjects of Chriſt are diſtinguiſhed from the ſubjects of Satan. Have a care, therefore, leſt it happen to you as it did to the Egyptians; leſt the deſtroying angel, finding you without the blood of the lamb, the mark of your high calling, ſhould have power to deſtroy you.

Conſider, that this ſacrament is to Chriſtians what the tree of life was to Adam in paradiſe; it was to make him immortal; ſo that when he deprived himſelf of that food, he was left to his natural weakneſs, which ended in death, and miſery till death. And whoever deprives himſelf of this bread of life

will

will be left to themſelves, to the power of Satan, and to death eternal.

Do but lay to heart, how many tears it coſt St. Peter for a crime ſo near a-kin to this, and you will not lightly turn your back upon this ſacrament; it being in effect ſaying, *I am not one of Jeſus Chriſt's diſciples.*

And now the publick ſervice of the church concludes with a *moſt ſolemn bleſſing*, pronounced by the prieſt of God.

That you may always diſpoſe yourſelves to receive this bleſſing with devotion and advantage, I will ſhew you the certain bleſſed fruits of doing ſo. In the book of Numbers, [chap. vi. 22] there is a ſpecial charge given to the prieſts, by God himſelf, to bleſs the people. There is a ſpecial form for doing it; and there is a ſpecial bleſſing promiſed to follow upon the prieſt's bleſſing: *And I* (ſaith God) *will bleſs them.*

In Deut. x. 8, it is expreſsly ſaid, that God ſeparated the tribe of Levi, *to bleſs in his name.* And accordingly, 2 Chron. xxx. 27, we have the prieſts bleſſing the people; and it is there added, *That their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to God's holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven.*

Had the bleſſing of the prieſt under the law ſuch a good effect, and has not Jeſus Chriſt given his miniſters as great a power? That would be to have very unworthy thoughts of the goſpel miniſtry indeed:—a miniſtry to which, St. Paul expreſsly tells us, God has in

an

an eſpecial manner committed the power of reconciling men to God.[k]

I will ſet before you the devotion with which the people of God received the bleſſing of the prieſt; a pattern not to be deſpiſed. It is in the fiftieth chapter of Eccleſiaſticus, at the 20th and 21ſt verſes, you read as follows: —*When they had finiſhed the ſervice, then the prieſt lifted up his hands over the whole congregation, to give the bleſſing of the Lord with his lips,—and they bowed themſelves down to worſhip, that they might receive a bleſſing from the Moſt High.* And a bleſſing moſt certainly every Chriſtian receives from the Moſt High, according as he is diſpoſed for ſuch a mercy, and as he has qualified himſelf by his devout behaviour in the ſervice of God.

The publick ſervice being ended, a ſerious Chriſtian will not conclude that he has done all that is required of him. He will rather conſider where he has been; what he has been doing; what he has heard; what he has prayed for. He will conſider, that he has been at the houſe of God, where he has heard God ſpeaking to him by his own miniſter. He will give God thanks for the helps and means he has vouchſafed him of knowing his duty, and of performing it. He will call to mind what he has heard, and beg of God that he may profit by it; that he may live as he has been taught, and as a Chriſtian ought to live. In ſhort, he will not let the world

[k] 2 Cor. v. 18.

take

take poſſeſſion of his heart as ſoon as he comes out of the church, but will endeavour to edify his ſoul by ſome ſuch thoughts and ſhort petitions as theſe:—

'I have been profeſſing openly my faith in 'God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, to 'whom I was dedicated in baptiſm. I have 'been told by his own miniſter, and out of 'his own word, what my duty is, *how I ought 'to walk ſo as to pleaſe God.* I have been pray-'ing for ſuch bleſſings as may make me happy 'while I live, and for ſuch graces and virtues 'without which I ſhall be moſt miſerable 'when I die. If I do not profit by theſe 'things, they will moſt ſurely riſe up in judg-'ment againſt me.

'To be ſo often told what will pleaſe and 'what will diſpleaſe God, and not to mind it: 'to know that he is terrible in judgment, and 'not to fear him: to know that he is gracious 'and merciful, and not to love him: to be ſo 'often put in mind, that God ſees all my 'actions, and not to be afraid to offend him: 'to pray ſo often, and ſo long for God's 'graces, without laying it to heart, that it 'muſt be my own fault if I do not obtain his 'grace and aſſiſtance to mend my life.

'What will this end in; if I paſs one 'Lord's day, one year, after another, without 'growing better by the many ſermons I hear; 'by the prayers offered ſo often to God for 'me; by the times appointed for the taking 'care of my ſoul? Is this the way of prepa-

'ring

'ring for eternity,—for an eternity of happi-
'neſs or miſery? Shall I ſtill continue to keep
'theſe thoughts out of my mind? Shall I
'ſhut my eyes, and not ſee the danger of
'being loſt for ever? God forbid! (will every
'one ſay that has any grace) I will rather
'pray God to deliver me from hardneſs of
'heart, and contempt of his word. And
'ſince he has promiſed to hear the petitions
'of ſuch as aſk in his Son's name, I will, for
'his ſake, beſeech him to pardon my imper-
'fections and indevotions. And I will en-
'deavour for the time to come, that my de-
'votion and zeal ſhall be anſwerable to my
'wants. And then, I am ſure, I ſhall return
'home with a bleſſing.'

I pray God we may all do ſo, as often as we meet here to worſhip God. And that our behaviour when out of the church, may be ſuch as becomes the true diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt.

To whom, &c.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

THE TRUE REASON WHY PEOPLE DO NOT PROFIT BY SERMONS.

May I ever read and preach thy Word, O God, with the ſame ſpirit with which it was written. Give me, and all that ſhall hear me, a lively ſenſe of the Almighty power of a True Faith, to enable us to overcome all the temptations of the world, the fleſh, and the devil: and purify all our hearts by this faith, that we may profit by thy word, be converted and ſaved, through thy mercy in Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

HEB. iv. 2.

THE WORD PREACHED DID NOT PROFIT THEM, NOT BEING MIXED WITH FAITH IN THEM THAT HEARD IT.

AMONGST the great number of Chriſtians who every Lord's day hear the word of God *read*, *explained*, and *preached*; how many are there, who by their lives ſhew plainly that they do not *profit*, are not *bettered* by it!

This is a melancholy conſideration; and therefore it will be neceſſary that you ſhould know *what is the true reaſon why people do not profit by Sermons.* We are told, in the words juſt read to you, *that it was for want of faith.*

God

God had promiſed the children of Iſrael the land of Canaan for an inheritance for themſelves and their poſterity.[a] They were told that they would meet with difficulties, and ſo they would not go forward; that is, they would not take God's word, that he would deliver them out of all the difficulties and dangers they ſhould meet with. This highly diſpleaſed God; and for a puniſhment of their unbelief, they were none of them who thus diſtruſted the promiſe of God, not one, was ſuffered to ſet a foot in that good land.

Now this is the caſe of too many Chriſtians. The bleſſed God would have all his creatures enjoy that happineſs for which they were created. As matters now ſtand with us, we cannot poſſibly be happy, till our natures are mended, and changed for the better. We foreſee ſome difficulties in doing this; we will not give credit to the word and promiſe of God, that he will make us able to overcome all difficulties, and ſufficiently reward us when we have done ſo.

What will this end in? Why; juſt as it did with the children of Iſrael. They never ſaw the land of Canaan, by reaſon of their unbelief. And, as ſure as they did not enter into the promiſed land, ſo ſure ſhall not any Chriſtian ſee the heavenly Canaan, *the kingdom of Heaven*, who will not attend to, and give credit to God's word, his promiſes, and threatenings, and order their lives accordingly.

[a] See Deut. i. 32, &c.

Now;

Now; this word, and theſe promiſes, and threatenings, are read and preached every Lord's day. How then comes it to paſs, that the generality of Chriſtians are not bettered by it? The anſwer is, the text juſt now read: *The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*

You ſee, Chriſtians, how much depends upon a *true* and *ſaving faith*—even no leſs than your eternal *ſalvation* or *damnation.*

It would be an high preſumption for any miniſter of Chriſt to ſay this, without authority from God's word. Hear then what our Lord Chriſt ſaith,[b] *Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned:* that is, he that believeth the goſpel, which contains God's mercy to man, and man's duty to God, and is baptiſed, and promiſeth and yieldeth ſincere obedience to that goſpel; every ſuch perſon, man or woman, ſhall certainly be ſaved. And as certainly, every one, man or woman, who *believeth not* that goſpel, which alſo containeth *God's wrath againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*;[c] whoever receiveth not this goſpel, nor believeth it when preached to him, *ſhall be damned.*

Now, if theſe two concerning truths do not awaken every one who hears them, it muſt be for want of attending to them; or, in the words of the text, *for want of faith in them that hear them.*

[b] Mark xvi. 15, 16. [c] Rom. i. 18. But

But to awaken and to cure us of this want of faith, this muſt be the work of thy grace, O bleſſed God! To thee we muſt apply for grace to hear thy word with ſerioufneſs and attention; and for faith to profit by what we hear.

We are aſſured, that without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God. We are aſſured alſo, that a ſaving faith is the gift of God. And this gift and grace will not be denied to any one who begs it of God with a deſire to be bettered by it. So that every one is without excuſe, who does not hear the word preached, and profit by it.

The miniſters of God are appointed by him to read to you and to explain the truths of the goſpel. To make Jeſus Chriſt and his goſpel known unto men. To endeavour to convince them of the danger they are in without a Redeemer. To ſhew men what they muſt do to be ſaved. To beg of God to bleſs their inſtructions. To endeavour to awaken the conſciences of the careleſs, and to make them feel, if poſſible, the diſeaſes they labour under, and the wounds which ſin hath made in their ſouls; that they may more cheerfully embrace the means which the mercy of God hath provided for their recovery.

For God is ſo wonderfully good and merciful to his unhappy creatures, as to promiſe, that he will pardon the greateſt ſinners who ſhall repent and return to their duty, and will make them happy for ever.

When

When theſe things are heard and not minded, as if people had no concern in them, no wonder they do not profit by our ſermons:—for converſion and ſalvation are not always the effect of ſermons, but the grace of God accompanying them, and the diſpoſition by which they are heard and received; namely, if they are heard with pleaſure, and attended to with ſerioufneſs.

Now, to keep theſe merciful truths in your minds,—to perſuade you to attend to them,—to give credit to them,—not to ruin yourſelves by not minding them;—theſe are the end of all our ſermons. And may God give his bleſſing to them, and to all that hear them with faith and attention!

In order to this, you muſt firſt know what that faith is, the want of which is the occaſion of people's *not profiting by Sermons*. Why; in few and plain words, faith is the believing, the giving entire credit to, the truths which God has made known to us in his holy word. And this faith is to be attained by *hearing*, *attending* to, and *dwelling* upon, thoſe truths; and begging of God ſo to open and ſet them upon our hearts, that we may not be eaſy, till, by God's grace, we live like people who ſincerely do believe ſuch truths.

Perhaps you will ſay, we *do believe* the truths of the goſpel. Pray have a care of deceiving yourſelves. Remember the words of the

apoſtle,[d] *The very devils believe, and tremble.* They know every article of the creed to be true, and this makes them tremble.

You will wonder, when I tell you, that there are men in one reſpect even worſe than devils; they are ſuch as know, and dare not deny, the truths of the goſpel, and yet *do not tremble*, nor are they afraid for themſelves.

But you will perhaps aſk—if the devils believe, why may not they be ſaved? Why; *their caſe is this*; they do indeed know, that every article of the creed is true; but they are ſo hardened in ſin and pride, that they will not aſk God's *pardon*, his *grace*, and *help*, to reſtore them to his favour. And whether people will believe it or not, *this is the caſe of all wicked men*, with this only difference, *that they are yet in a ſtate of trial*; (which thoſe evil ſpirits are paſt, and have loſt) whereas the wickedeſt of men in this life are ſtill in a *ſtate of trial*, and in a poſſibility of being ſaved, if they can but humble themſelves before God, *acknowledge their iniquities, and that they have tranſgreſſed againſt the Lord their God*;—if they will but beg of God, of his great mercy, and for his Son's ſake, to *increaſe their faith, to awaken their conſciences*, and to give them the graces they ſtand in need of,—with full purpoſe of heart of doing what they believe they ought to do. All ſuch, though their ſins be never ſo many and great, are yet in a ſtate and way of ſalvation and happineſs.

[d] James ii. 19.

By

By this you ſee, Chriſtians, that there is ſomething more neceſſary to ſalvation than *barely believing the truths of the goſpel.* Theſe you may know, and believe, and yet be ruined for ever. Every ſerious Chriſtian, therefore, will be deſirous to know what more is neceſſary to make our belief *a ſaving faith.* And may God grant that we may ſo explain this heavenly grace, that not one of us may have reſt in his ſoul, till we obtain of God, (for faith is the gift of God) till we obtain ſuch a faith as will enable us to profit by the truths of the goſpel, when propoſed and explained to us by God's miniſters!

In order to this, you ſhall in the firſt place hear ſuch truths as are proper to awaken men, and to convince them, *That the care of their ſouls ought to be the great concern of their whole lives.* Such truths are theſe that follow:—

First; That all men are by nature in ſuch a condition, as will certainly end in their everlaſting miſery, if they are left to themſelves and to their own deſires and choices. For being a race of ſinful creatures, and prone to evil, an holy God cannot take pleaſure in them to make them happy, until their corrupt nature be mended, and changed for the better.

Now, God knows, that of ourſelves we cannot do this, if we are left to ourſelves, and the weakneſs of our own corrupt nature and reaſon; he hath therefore, at the inſtance

and for the merits of his own Son, promiſed to help us, to renew our corrupt nature, to pardon what is paſt, and to aſſiſt us for the time to come to become ſuch as he can take pleaſure in.

In order, therefore, to diſpoſe us to cloſe with this great goodneſs of God; to make us afraid for ourſelves; to humble us; and let us ſee and abhor ourſelves, for having broken laws ſo holy, juſt, and good, and how liable we have made ourſelves to his juſt indignation; God has given us numberleſs inſtances, in his holy word, of his dreadful diſpleaſure againſt ſuch perſons and places as have broken his laws without fear, and without repentance; —that all ſinners may ſee what they muſt expect in this or the next world, or in both.

God has alſo made known to us, that this is not the world we were made for; that we are here only in a ſtate of trial, that our corrupt nature may be mended, and we made fit for a better life and ſtate when we die. That if this be not done before we die, we ſhall be ruined for ever.

To prevent this, God, who would have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge and belief of the truth, has ſent his only Son from heaven, to let us know his love and pleaſure, and what is neceſſary to our eternal happineſs. And his bleſſed Son has aſſured us, that he has made our peace with God; that he will give us all the aſſiſtance we can want

want to make us acceptable to God; that God will make us happy for ever, if we ſhall ſtrive and do our beſt to live as he has taught us; and that we ſhall be miſerable, beyond what we can imagine, if we deſpiſe or neglect theſe offers of mercy.

Theſe are truths made known to us in God's word,—for the direction of our lives, for the confirmation of our faith, and for the trial of our obedience.

To fix theſe truths in your minds and memories is, or ſhould be, the end of all our ſermons. And our Lord has foretold us, that it is Satan who tempts men to neglect or forget them, that he may ruin their ſouls.

People do not conſider this power of the devil over the hearts of thoſe who do not fear God, nor are afraid for themſelves. But pray hear what our Saviour ſaith :[e] *The ſeed ſown is the word of God. If thoſe that hear are careleſs, and not concerned for themſelves, then cometh the devil, and taketh the word out of their hearts, that they may not believe and be ſaved.* So that you ſee, it is the great work of Satan to make you hear ſermons and God's word read to you with indifference: and that this is one of the *true reaſons why people do not profit by Sermons.*

[Although this Sermon appears unfiniſhed, yet the ſubject of it correſponding with the foregoing diſcourſes, the Editor has thought it his duty to print it even in its unfiniſhed ſtate.]

[e] Luke viii.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

THE MISERY OF NOT ATTENDING TO THE WORD AND MINISTERS OF GOD.

O Important ſubject! Grant, O God, that I myſelf may ſee, and be able to teach others, the danger of living in any known ſin; of being diverted from conſidering our latter end, by the cares, pleaſures, or other idols of this world. Let this truth be ever preſent with us—that we have but a ſhort time to live, and an eternal intereſt depending; that we may not ſquander one moment of this ſhort life in that which will not profit us in the day of neceſſity, and the hour of death. O let us never loſe the ſight of that important hour, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake! Amen.

PROV. V. 11, 12, 13.

AND THOU MOURN AT THE LAST, WHEN THY FLESH AND THY BODY ARE CONSUMED; [THAT IS, WHEN YOU COME TO DIE] AND SAY, HOW HAVE I HATED INSTRUCTION, AND MY HEART DESPISED REPROOF; AND HAVE NOT OBEYED THE VOICE OF MY TEACHERS, NOR INCLINED MINE EAR TO THEM THAT INSTRUCTED ME.[a]

THIS, good Chriſtians, is what I would endeavour to prevent; that when you come to die, your conſciences may not reproach you—for having not attended to the word of God read or preached to you,—for having

[a] See Wiſd. iii. 19. Matth. x. 14; xiii. 3, 51; and xxviii. 18, 19. Mark iv. 9. Luke x. 16; and xi. 28. John xx. 21. Acts xiii. 48; & xx. 28. Eph. x. 11. 1 Theſſ. iv. 8. Heb. xiii. 17. 1 John iv. 6.

having not obeyed the voice of your teachers; —for the great number of ſermons, admonitions, and reproofs, that have been loſt upon you; for turning a deaf ear to thoſe who were appointed to inſtruct you, and deſpiſing their reproof.

You hear, in the words juſt read to you, what a perſon, directed by the Spirit of God, aſſures you will be one of the great things that will torment and trouble you when you come to die, if you have led a careleſs and ungodly life. That you will moſt ſadly lament your perverſeneſs, your folly, and madneſs; and wiſh, with all your ſoul, that you had heard with patience the threatenings of the goſpel, and that you had taken the good advice of ſuch as, out of pity to your ſouls, had forewarned you of the ruin you were bringing upon yourſelves, by diſregarding the word of God, and the truths of the goſpel.

Believe it, Chriſtians, this is the very beginning of ſin and of ruin; when truths of the greateſt concern to us are not minded; when the means of knowledge, of grace, of faith, and of ſalvation are ſlighted.

Conſider, that *preaching* is an ordinance of God, and an ordinance on which depends in ſome meaſure the ſalvation of the world; for how ſhall they hear, how ſhall they believe, without a preacher?[b]

This ordinance therefore neglected or deſpiſed, this ſin continued in, how often does

[b] Rom. x. 14.

it

it provoke God to leave men to themſelves, to withdraw from them his graces and his ſpirit! Upon which Satan takes them under his government, and then *muſt* follow ſin and miſery.

You will take notice, that this was the very caſe of Judas. How many concerning truths did he hear from his Lord and maſter! — eſpecially this one ſo often repeated, *Take heed and beware of covetouſueſs.* This was loſt upon him, becauſe he would not lay it to heart; and you all know what followed. The words of the text were moſt dreadfully fulfilled upon him; he mourned at the laſt, and left this world in deſpair.

Chriſtians ſhould conſider, that this may be their own caſe, that it certainly *will* be ſo, if they hate to be informed and reproved, if they obey not the voice of their teachers.

Now; the things which I would deſire you to take notice of, as implied in the text, are theſe following:

Firſt; That all Chriſtians, even the moſt knowing, will often want to be put in mind of their duty; to be taught, to be told of their faults, their infirmities, and backſlidings.

2*dly*. That God has appointed certain perſons, who, at the peril of their own ſouls, are to do this—*to watch for your ſouls as they that muſt give an account.*[c]

3*dly*. That ſuch as neglect or deſpiſe this appointment of God, or the miniſters ordained

[c] Heb. xiii. 17.

for

for this purpoſe, will have reaſon to repent of it ſadly when they come to die, and to conſider what a life they have led, and what ſins they have fallen into, for want of hearkening to the voice of their teachers.

Theſe truths, one would hope, you do not want to be convinced of.

Every one for himſelf knows, how very apt we are to forget our duty, and the vows that are upon us, and to fall into ſins which we have repented of; how often we want to be awakened into a ſenſe of the danger we are in, and of the hopes ſet before us.

Every body, who knows any thing of Chriſtianity, knows likewiſe, that there are perſons appointed by the Holy Ghoſt, as overſeers, and to feed the flock of Chriſt; to teach, to reprove, to rebuke with all authority, to inſtruct ſuch as oppoſe themſelves, that they may recover them out of the ſnare of the devil.

Laſtly; every Chriſtian, who is acquainted with the goſpel, muſt know the ſad doom of ſuch as *may* know the will of God, and will not hear or mind it, nor order their life accordingly: *That it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgment, than for ſuch people*, who do not conſider, that when they deſpiſe the perſons, the miniſtry, or the doctrine, of ſuch as are ordained to inſtruct them, *They deſpiſe not man, but God*: ſo ſaith St. Paul expreſsly, 1 Theſſ. iv. 8.

Taking

Taking it therefore for granted, that you believe the preaching of the goſpel to be one of thoſe neceſſary means of ſalvation,—without which you would either be altogether ignorant of your duty, or ſoon forget it,—without which you would live and die in ſin, and without hopes of mercy; taking this for granted, I will take ſome pains (and I hope it will not be loſt) to convince you,

Firſt; Of the infinite danger of living in any known ſin, leſt death ſhould ſurpriſe and ſend us to a miſerable eternity:

2*dly*. That the way not to be ſurpriſed by death is, to have death much in our thoughts:

3*dly*. The great care we ſhould take not to be diverted from the thoughts of death, by the cares, pleaſures, or amuſements of the world:

4*thly*. That when we come to die, we ſhall have very different thoughts of theſe idols of the world, than what we are apt to have at preſent:

5*thly*. That the ill uſe and loſs of our time, which cannot be recalled, will then be the moſt tormenting thought to thoſe who now lead a careleſs and a ſinful life:

Laſtly; That whatever they think of it, this will moſt ſurely be the fate and puniſhment of thoſe who refuſe to hear and obey the voice of their teachers.

I. In the firſt place, pray conſider with me *the infinite danger of living in any known ſin*. Now whoever does ſo, lives in rebellion againſt his

his Maker, one who can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell. He moſt ungratefully offends the beſt Father and Friend, the moſt indulgent Prince and Lawgiver, who commands his ſubjects nothing but what is abſolutely neceſſary to make them happy; nor forbids them any thing but what would hurt and ruin them. You deſpiſe the patience and long-ſuffering of God, who can deprive you of life whenever he pleaſes, and continues you in life only that you may be converted and ſaved. You are in danger of provoking God to withhold his grace, without which you can never repent, never be ſaved. You, in effect, renounce being a ſubject of God, and chooſe to be a ſlave to Satan. You are in the direct way to atheiſm—even to wiſh there was no God to call you to an account.

This is the very condition of every one who lives in the practice of any *known ſin*; or who, when he perceives that he has offended God, does not immediately repent of it, and reſolve to do ſo no more. And whoſoever ſhall be ſurpriſed by death in this ſtate, has nothing to expect but a miſerable eternity.

II. This ſhould convince us of *the great neceſſity amd advantage of having the* THOUGHTS OF DEATH *much at heart.*

If Chriſtians would but ſeriouſly conſider, that the ſentence of death is already paſſed upon them, (as it really is upon every one of us) they would be apt to think *now*, juſt as they

they would do when that ſentence comes to be put in execution. Why ſhould I ſet my heart upon a world where I am to continue ſo very ſhort a while, and where I am ſure never to meet with true ſatisfaction? What if God, ſeeing me very intent upon the world, and ſetting up my reſt here, ſhould ſay unto me, as he has done to many others, *Thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee!* What then will this unrighteous gain profit me? How bitter will the remembrance of theſe unlawful pleaſures be to me! With what pain and grief ſhall I then part with theſe riches, theſe pleaſures, theſe idols, which I am now ſo fond of!

Let me, therefore, beg of you to ſuppoſe you were now lying at the point of death.

Would you, for the ſake of leaving a better eſtate behind you, would you take advantage of that poor man's neceſſities;—of this poor man's ignorance? Would you recommend to your children the way of life you yourſelf have led? Would you not rather tell them, Multitude of buſineſs has ruined me; it has made me forget myſelf, my God, my duty to both, and the end of my being ſent into the world.

Or if you have led a careleſs, uſeleſs, idle life, would you not charge your children, as they hope to be ſaved, *not to follow your example?* Would you not bid them, over and over again, remember the ſentence paſſed upon

upon the unprofitable ſervant, *Caſt him into outer darkneſs.*

Or ſuppoſe yourſelf ſurpriſed by the approach of death in the midſt of a life of pleaſures, would you not tell your children, how ſad and bitter the remembrance of ſuch a life is, when one comes to die? That you have, by leading ſuch a life, lived in an utter forgetfulneſs of God; done little or no good in your generation; loſt all the principles of a Chriſtian life; ſo fixed your heart and ſoul to theſe vanities, that you cannot raiſe your thoughts to God, nor pray to him, in this time of diſtreſs, with any hopes of being heard.

Laſtly; would not the moſt learned man, upon ſetting death before his eyes, confeſs the folly and impertinence of every ſtudy which does not tend to better our neighbour or ourſelves, to glorify God, to mend the corruption of our nature, and to reſtore us to the image of God; which does not ſerve to furniſh the underſtanding with heavenly wiſdom, and the ſoul with devout affections?

In ſhort, death will come, whether we think of it or not; the time, it is true, is uncertain; but this we are ſure of, that the reaſon why the unfruitful tree was not immediately cut down was, that it might (if ſpared a little longer) bring forth fruit worthy of its place in the vineyard.

III. *This ſhews the great care we ought to take not to be diverted from the ſight of death by*

by a ſupine negligence, or by the buſineſs or pleaſures of this world.

Few people imagine, that they ſhall ever forget they muſt die; and yet how many live to find themſelves deceived, and never think of preparing for death till they come within the ſight of eternity! It is then indeed they will ſee their error; but who will aſſure them that it is not then too late? It is for this reaſon, our Lord has made it one of the expreſs duties of Chriſtianity, *to watch continually*, leſt that day overtake us unawares; becauſe ſo very much depends upon it. He has alſo forewarned us, in the parable of the ſeed ſown among thorns, what are the things which will certainly divert us from the thoughts of what muſt come hereafter; aſſuring us, that an heart poſſeſſed with the love of *riches*, or filled with the *cares*, the *pleaſures*, or *idols*, of this world, is utterly incapable of entertaining any laſting thoughts of another life. —

It is true, a form of religion and piety, and ſome ſerious thoughts and purpoſes, and even good works, may for a time ſubſiſt with a life of ſenſual pleaſures, worldly amuſements, and the love of riches; but at laſt, he who knows what is in man, aſſures us, that theſe will choak every grain of good ſeed which his Spirit had ſown in our hearts.

Let us therefore be perſuaded, by all that is dear to us, not to loſe the ſight of death, by diverſions which will ſignify nothing to

us when we come to die, but only to torment us. For,

IV. *When we come to die, we ſhall have very different thoughts of all theſe idols of the world, than what we are apt to have at preſent.*

You have ſeen a child extremely fond of his playthings, and moſt impatient to part with them: an hour after, perhaps, he is taken ill, and you ſtrive to divert him by the things he was juſt before ſo very fond of; but all in vain: the very ſight of them offends him. Why now, as ſure as we live, this will be the caſe of every ſoul of us, if we will ſet our hearts upon things which will not ſatisfy and comfort us when we come to die.

You are young, and you think a ſerious temper is not neceſſary. Depend upon it, you will not think ſo, if God ſhall viſit you, and bring you within the ſight of death. You will then ſee the folly and madneſs of a life ſpent in ſin and vanity.

You are at preſent fond of what you call pleaſant company; you will not believe it, that a time will come when you will cry out, Would to God I had never ſeen thoſe unhappy people who tempted me to an idle life, which made me forget myſelf, my God, and eſpecially my latter end!

As for ſenſual pleaſures, of every kind, it will be found true of them what the wiſe man ſaid of wine, *At the laſt they will ſting like a ſerpent, and bite like an adder.* Their wound will be mortal.

You lead an uſeleſs life; and you make your mind eaſy with ſuch thoughts as theſe: I have enough to live on, and why ſhould I trouble myſelf with labour and care? I will tell you why; for this reaſon, amongſt others; becauſe, when you come to die, ſuch a ſcripture as this may come to torment your ſoul, *Caſt the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.*

To avoid this ſentence, there are others ſo very intent upon the world, that they make a little religion ſerve their turn; nor will they give themſelves time to hear, what their teachers would tell them, that *this* is not the world they were made for; and that they will have quite other thoughts of this world when they come in ſight of that which is to come, and look back upon the little they have done towards preparing for a life which muſt never end.

V. It is then *the* ILL USE *and* LOSS OF TIME *will be the torment of their ſouls, who now lead a careleſs or a ſinful life.*

Moſt people in health are apt, too apt, to flatter themſelves that they have time enough before them, and that, as long as they live, their ſalvation will be in their own hands. This deluſion has been the ruin of many a ſoul. *I ſay unto you* (ſaith our Lord) *many ſhall ſeek to enter, and ſhall not be able.* This is fair warning to ſuch as will be making experiments how long they may go on in a care-

leſs way of living, depending upon their own purpoſes, and the goodneſs and grace of God, whenever they ſhall think fit to aſk for it; not conſidering that a time *may* come, that a time *will* come, when by a juſt judgment they ſhall not be able to make one ſtep towards their ſalvation, becauſe they deſpiſed the long-ſuffering and goodneſs of God, which was deſigned to lead them to repentance.

Chriſtians do not conſider, as they ſhould do, that we are in this life in a ſtate of trial; that this trial is for eternity; and that as we behave ourſelves well or ill in this life, it will be well or ill with us for ever.

He that lays this to heart, will never think his time a burthen; will never ſeek for ways to get it off his hands; will never imagine that he may ſpend it as he pleaſeth; will never live as if he had nothing to do.

Now, that you may ſet a true value upon the time which God allows us, in order to have our corrupt nature mended, and to fit us for heaven, do but repreſent to your minds one, who, when he comes to die, and looking backwards, can ſee nothing that he has done but what muſt render him unworthy of the favour of God;—who has done little or no good in his generation;—who has done a great deal of evil, and has no longer time to repent of it, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance;—who has done wrong to his neighbour, and has no time to make reſtitution;—

who

who is ſurpriſed in a courſe of ſin, in the midſt of worldly cares or pleaſures, in an utter forgetfulneſs of God, and the duty he owes to him.

One cannot but tremble when we but ſuppoſe ſuch a caſe as this, leſt it ſhould be your's, or mine, or any Chriſtian's, when he comes to lie upon his death-bed.

And yet it *may* be ſo, and it really *will* be ſo, if we neglect the means of grace ordained by God to keep us from bringing this ruin upon ourſelves.

VI. Particularly, *If Chriſtians refuſe or neglect to hear and obey the voice of their teachers.*

Moſt people are apt to believe they know their duty as well as thoſe that are ordained to inſtruct them. And the truth is, the duties of chriſtianity are ſo plain and reaſonable, that the moſt unlearned need not periſh in a chriſtian country for want of knowledge. How then comes it to paſs, that ſo many chriſtians are in the certain way of perdition? The reaſon is plain; they do not attend and hearken to their teachers, with that ſeriouſneſs they ought to do, who would ever and anon put them in remembrance of what *muſt* follow their diſobedience.

People know their duty; but they are, the very beſt of men, but too apt to forget it. They believe the penalty—but are diverted, too often, from laying it to heart. Worldly cares and buſineſs, ſenſual pleaſures, and other

amuſements, are the thorns mentioned by our Lord, which choak the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Beſides this, our corrupt nature is very unwilling to dwell upon ſuch amazing ſubjects as muſt of neceſſity give great uneaſineſs to people's minds, who are engaged in any ſinful way. They will avoid, they will ſhut out, the thoughts of death and judgment, if poſſible, out of their very memory.

And therefore our gracious Lord, who knows what man is, and the terrible conſequence of ſuch obſtinacy, has appointed his miniſters, who, at the peril of their own ſouls, ſhall ever and anon bring theſe things to your remembrance; and preſs you, as you value your ſouls, to dwell upon them; and as often as you forget them, ſo often to ſound them in your ears, until, by the grace of God, you order your life accordingly, and bring forth fruit anſwerable to amendment of life.

And they that neglect to hear theſe truths from their teachers will moſt certainly mourn at the laſt, and ſay, "How have I hated in-"ſtruction, and my heart deſpiſed reproof!" when they come to ſee what their negligence has ended in.

How ſuch negligence *does end*, the ſame inſpired writer tells us in the following verſes: they will be forced to confeſs, *I was almoſt in all evil.* And the obſervation is certainly moſt juſt, *That the profanation of the Lord's day,*

day, and the neglect of the ordinances then administered, is the beginning of all evil; and the greateſt criminals have been forced to confeſs this at the laſt, when their eyes have been opened upon the ſight of death and judgment, and what muſt follow.

And let no Chriſtian, even the moſt knowing, be ſo conceited as to think he ſtands not in need of inſtruction from his teacher, after what the apoſtle has declared,[c] *That the preaching of the goſpel is the power of God unto the ſalvation of them that hear and believe.* And *that it pleaſeth God, by the fooliſhneſs of preaching, to ſave them that believe.* Intimating, that God has annexed the grace of converſion and ſalvation, in a great meaſure, to the preaching of the goſpel, to them who cloſe with this ordinance, who eſteem, and are ſenſibly affected with it, and endeavour and pray to be bettered by it.

And they that imagine that they know their duty, and need no teachers, will however ſtand in need of being put in mind both of their duty and danger, which the beſt of men are too apt to forget, and fall into the ſins they have repented of.

And one moſt neceſſary grace they ſurely want, (who think they want not to be inſtructed) and that is, *the grace of humility*, the want of which (or elſe they underſtand little of their duty) will ſhut them out of heaven.

[c] Rom. i. 16. 1 Cor. i. 18, 21.

And

And now, good Chriſtians, if you have attended to what has been ſaid upon this ſubject, you will, I hope, be diſpoſed to come to ſome ſuch reſolutions as theſe following:

'I will no longer flatter myſelf, that my 'time is in my own power; this ſhort and 'uncertain time of life is my time of trial, of 'grace, and of fitting myſelf for heaven and 'happineſs: how long it will laſt, God only 'knows, and therefore, through his grace, I 'will not let it ſlip and loſe it. I will thank 'God for his patience in waiting ſo long for 'the fruits of his graces; and beg of him to 'enable me to bring forth ſuch fruit as his 'mercy and goodneſs will accept of. And I 'will endeavour, by a ſincere repentance and 'an holy life, to prevent the ſad reproaches 'of an awakened conſcience, when I ſhall 'have no more time to do any thing towards 'making my peace with God.

'It is not now a queſtion among Chriſ-'tians, as it was among heathens,—What 'will become of us when we die? Our Lord 'Chriſt came down from heaven to let us 'know this, and that death infallibly ſends 'us to a much better, or much worſe place, 'than that we are now in. And therefore I 'will make it one part of my daily prayers, 'that God may not ſuffer me to forget my 'latter end, and what will follow. I ſee the 'advantage it would be to myſelf, and to the 'world, if we were often put in mind of this

'by

'by thoſe that are ordained to inſtruct us. 'It would teach us more than we are aware 'of; it would tie up our hands from *injuſtice*, '*oppreſſion*, and every *evil act*; and keep our 'hearts from *malice*, from every *ſinful pleaſure*, 'which we ſhall then go to account for.

'I will, therefore, (will every ſerious chriſ-'tian ſay) I will bleſs God for the paſtors he 'has appointed to put us in remembrance of 'theſe things; and I will endeavour to profit 'by their inſtructions.

'I ſee plainly, that every thing conſpires 'to make us loſe the remembrance of the dan-'gers that encompaſs us. The pleaſures we 'are ſo fond of are only an art againſt think-'ing of death. The cares of the world, and 'the love of worldly things, are only a de-'vice of Satan to make us ſet up our reſt 'here. Every vice we are fond of, every ſin 'we commit, makes us ſtill more unwilling 'to think of death. What then would be-'come of us, if it were nobody's duty to ſhew 'us whither our ſteps will certainly lead us? 'In one word, we ſhould live, as we ſpeak, 'by chance; we ſhould never ſeriouſly conſi-'der what we came into the world for; what 'we are doing; whither we are going.

'I will not look upon the inſtructions of 'the miniſters of God as the words of men, 'but, as they are indeed, grounded upon the 'word of God, and as ſuch I will hearken to 'them. And I will hope and depend upon

'it,

'it, his bleſſing will go along with them, if 'it is not my own fault.—*They watch for our 'ſouls as they that muſt give an account.* What 'a mournful account will they have to give 'of thoſe that will not hear their inſtructions! 'And what a mournful end will they make '*who ſhall deſpiſe their reproof!*'

Horrible, (ſaith the wiſe man) *horrible will be the end of the unrighteous: they have no hope, no comfort, in the day of trial. But the righteous hath hope, even in his death.*[d]

Theſe are the thoughts which will ſupport his departing ſoul:

'I have obeyed the voice of my teachers, 'and inclined mine ear to them that inſtructed 'me; and their inſtructions have not been in 'vain. They often put me in mind of the 'thoughts I ſhould have when I ſhould come 'to die; and theſe thoughts made me more 'careful of my duty, and kept me from a 'thouſand evils. The return of every Lord's 'day brought along with it its eſpecial bleſs-'ing; either ſome advice, or ſome reproof, 'ſome duty I had forgot, or ſome ſin I had 'unwarily fallen into. Theſe I received as 'meſſages from God, and ordered my life ac-'cordingly, and now I have the comfort of 'doing ſo, when I moſt ſtand in need of it.'

Who would not wiſh to make ſuch an end? And ſurely it is in the power of every ſoul of us, through the grace of God, to make

[d] Wiſdom iii.

ſuch

ſuch an end. Than which no ſight upon earth is ſo charming, ſo deſirable, as to ſee a dying man cheerful, and a ſoul departing with comfort, with a certain proſpect of a bleſſed reſurrection.

O God! grant that this may be the caſe of myſelf, and of every one that hears me. That we may love, and attend to, the word and miniſters of God. That we may live in the fear of God, and die in his favour, for the Lord Jeſus' ſake.

To whom, &c.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

THE SHAME AND DANGER OF BEING CHRISTIANS WITHOUT CHRISTIANITY.

EZEKIEL xliii. 10.

THOU SON OF MAN, SHEW THE HOUSE TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY MAY BE ASHAMED OF THEIR INIQUITIES: AND LET THEM MEASURE THE PATTERN.[a]

THE laſt eight chapters of Ezekiel have reſpect unto the ſtate of the goſpel, and unto the New Jeruſalem mentioned in the Revelations, as appears from the forty-ſeventh chapter, and from the name of the city JEHOVAH-*Shammah*; that is, God is there.

The Holy Spirit having very particularly deſcribed the Temple and its ordinances, at the tenth verſe he commands the prophet to ſhew that deſcription to the houſe of Iſrael, (that is, in a ſpiritual ſenſe, to the Chriſtian Church) *that they may meaſure*, that is, take eſpecial notice of, *the pattern, and be aſhamed of their iniquities.*

Now; whatever was written aforetime was written for our inſtruction, eſpecially what

[a] See Prov. xxx. 12. Iſaiah lviii. 1. Jer. vi. 16. Matth. xx. 16. Rom. ii. 28; ix. 6. Tit. i. 16. Rev. ii. 5, 9.

was

was purpoſely deſigned for the uſe of the church of Chriſt. This then being by the Holy Ghoſt commanded as a very proper method of convincing people of their error, *to ſhew them the pattern they ought to imitate*, that they may be aſhamed when they ſee with their own eyes how ſadly they come ſhort of it; I ſhall therefore follow this direction, as far as that good Spirit ſhall enable me, and ſet before you—firſt, *The pattern which Chriſtians ought to follow*; *what they ought to be*; and then, ſecondly, *the manner how they imitate or follow this pattern.*

By which I would hope to convince ſuch as have any degree of ſerioufneſs or concern for their ſouls, *that as far as they come ſhort of this pattern, ſo far they will certainly come ſhort of that happineſs which God has promiſed his faithful ſervants.*

Now, in order to do this more effectually, we ſhall conſider,

Firſt; What is the great deſign of the goſpel:

2*dly*. What means God has ordained for making that deſign effectual:

3*dly*. What is required on our part towards bringing this deſign about.

A plain account of theſe things will ſhew Chriſtians to themſelves. And when they ſee how little they are affected with God's gracious deſign for their good, how little they have complied with the means ordained for bringing

bringing it about, and how very indifferently they have performed the duties required of them; they may be aſhamed of their iniquities, or be left without excuſe.

I. And firſt; THE GREAT DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL is, in the apoſtle's words, to *turn men from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*;—that their eyes being enlightened with ſaving truth, they may ſee the wonderful goodneſs of God to mankind, in offering them happineſs eternal upon the moſt favourable conditions;—that being made ſenſible of this, they may give glory to God, and ſhew forth his praiſe by fruits worthy of ſuch a favour.

And truly, the favour was ſo great, that mankind would hardly have believed it, had not God ſent his Son into the world, to aſſure them, that although they are ſinners, and that as ſuch he cannot take pleaſure in them, yet that he is ready to be reconciled to all ſuch as, being ſenſible and weary of their bad condition, are willing to accept deliverance upon the terms he has preſcribed, and are content to be governed by ſuch laws as he knows to be neceſſary to fit them for that happineſs which he deſigns for them.

And that they may not be at a loſs to know how that happineſs is to be attained, what are the duties required of us, and how we may be able to perform them, God, by his Son, has given us a full and plain account of

what

what is expected from us; upon what terms he will pardon us; and how we may be enabled to do what he requires of us.

To this end, he has appointed certain ordinances, to the ſerious obſervers of which he has promiſed his infallible bleſſing. He has alſo appointed an order of men, whoſe buſineſs it *ſhall be*, to teach and to explain theſe things,—to exhort Chriſtians not to neglect ſuch offers of mercy,—and to adminiſter thoſe ordinances, which he has appointed for enabling them to overcome all the difficulties they can poſſibly meet with.

And that men may not, at their peril, ſet light by theſe ordinances, and thoſe that adminiſter them, becauſe the ordinances are plain, and becauſe they that adminiſter them are men of like paſſions with themſelves,—God hath expreſsly declared, that they that deſpiſe *them*, deſpiſe *him*, for by *him* they are ſent; and that ſuch as will not lay hold of the means of grace which he has ordained, muſt not expect his aſſiſtance in this life, or his favour in the next, but ſhall be puniſhed for ever, for abuſing ſo great goodneſs.

The truth of all which the Son of God ſealed with his moſt precious blood; that men might not have any pretence to queſtion the truth of theſe things, or to ſlight them.

And to awaken them into a ſenſe of the hazard they run, if they ſhould be ſo perverſe as to deſpiſe that goodneſs which ſhould lead them

them to repent, God has made known to the world this concerning truth, *That he will call all men to an account; and that they that have done good ſhall go into life everlaſting; and they that have done evil, into everlaſting fire.* And that thus it will be, though all the world ſhould be ſo ſtupid as not to believe or mind it.

This is the deſign of the goſpel;—*this* is the Chriſtian's great concern;—*this* is his work.

Let us now conſider, how this gracious deſign affects the generality of Chriſtians.

One would expect, that when life and death are ſet before people, there would be no difficulty with them which they ſhould chooſe: that they would be very deſirous to be informed what will be expected from them; and be very thankful to thoſe whom God has appointed to inform them, and to be the miniſters of their reconciliation with God: and laſtly, one would expect a general concern and ſerioufneſs, wherever theſe things are believed.

But alas! the very contrary to all this is matter of fact. There are but few, in compariſon, that give themſelves the trouble of laying theſe things to heart at all. And therefore the generality of Chriſtians have no taſte, no ſenſe of, no value for, the kindneſs and love of God, held forth to us in this diſpenſation.

It is true, all that live among Chriſtians cannot but hear and *know ſomething* of theſe things:

things: but then the corrupt nature of man, which cannot bear to be reſtrained, ſtrives to pervert the deſign of God and the goſpel, according to the diſpoſition in which it finds them.

They that are *atheiſtically diſpoſed* think they ſee objections enough not to believe it. Of them that *do* believe and receive the goſpel, very many have only the *form of godlineſs*, but know nothing of the power thereof. Many *hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs*; many run into ſinful pleaſures; others ſuffer the cares of the world to take up all their thoughts and time; while others, who yet think their time innocently ſpent, are engaged in ſtudies which have no relation to the *one thing needful*. All theſe, however, are moved by the very ſame ſecret ſpring, namely, the ſatisfaction men find in forgetting themſelves and the deſign of the goſpel, which is—*to make us holy, that we may be happy*.

And this is the reaſon, that the name of Chriſt, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, (that is, the Chriſtian religion) is blaſphemed by unbelievers, becauſe of the careleſs and bad lives of Chriſtians—of ſuch Chriſtians as are in danger of being ſhut out of heaven, for being as bad as infidels.

But becauſe we ſhall be better able to judge, by coming to particulars, how far we come ſhort of our pattern, we will,

II. In

II. In the ſecond place, take a view of *the means which God has ordained for making the deſign of the goſpel effectual for the ſalvation of mankind.* And theſe are, *the Miniſtry of the Word, and the Sacraments.*

And firſt; foraſmuch as *without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God*, God has therefore given us *his holy word*, as the moſt powerful means of begetting and increaſing in us that faith which will ſave us, by bringing us to the knowledge and belief of God, his attributes, and perfections. For inſtance: that he is *infinite in goodneſs*, and therefore to be loved above all things; that he is infinitely *juſt* and *powerful*, and therefore to be feared; that his word is *true* from everlaſting, that therefore his promiſes may be depended on with the greateſt confidence; that he is *merciful*, and that he is *ſevere*; *kind* and *merciful* to ſuch as ſtrive to pleaſe him, and *dreadfully ſevere* to ſuch as deſpiſe his goodneſs, and break his laws.

This is the foundation of our faith; this is the mighty treaſure we enjoy; a bleſſing which the heathen world are ſtrangers to, and which even many Chriſtians are deprived of. Theſe are the oracles, the ſtatutes, and judgments of God, *which ſhew us what is good; and what the Lord our God requires of us*; which ſet before us the way of life, and the way of death; and *teach us what we muſt do to be ſaved. Which being in truth the word of God, does effectually work in them that believe.*

Having this advantage above all other writings, that ſuch as read or hear them with an honeſt mind, and ſincerely deſire to do the will of God, *ſuch ſhall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.*

In ſhort, this is that book of which the Spirit in the book of Revelations [ch. i. 3] affirms, *Bleſſed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this book, and keep thoſe things which are written therein.*

Having thus received of the Lord Jeſus, *how we ought to walk and to pleaſe God*, let us now ſee how we follow this pattern; what uſe we make of this mighty bleſſing.

And verily, there is ſuch a plain oppoſition betwixt the rules of the goſpel and the lives of many Chriſtians, that one cannot but fear that they make but very little uſe of God's word, either for increaſing their faith, or governing their lives. And yet they ſay they believe the goſpel, and that they hope to be ſaved.

This is a ſtrange deluſion indeed!—Can a man ſay with any truth, that he believes the goſpel, which gives a plain and poſitive account of the very different condition of good and bad men after death, which gives rules for Chriſtians to walk by, upon the obſervance or neglect of which they are to be happy or miſerable for ever: will a man ſay that he believes theſe things, and yet live as unconcernedly as if nothing were to be feared, nothing to be deſired?

Now,

Now, to hinder this deluſion from taking place, God has appointed an order of men, whom he has been pleaſed to call *his miniſters, his ambaſſadors*; whom he has made overſeers of his flock, and appointed them to *bleſs the people in his name*; to exhort and to rebuke gainſayers; and if they continue obſtinate, to reject them.

Theſe are their *powers*;—and their *duty* is, in Chriſt's ſtead, to exhort Chriſtians, *that they receive not the grace of God in vain*, but that they walk worthy of *him who hath called them out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*, and to give them warning of the great hazard of *holding the truth in unrighteouſneſs:* and to guard them againſt contempt, while they faithfully do their duty, Jeſus Chriſt has declared, *that he that deſpiſeth them, deſpiſeth God that ſends them.*[b] And has made it the mark of an heathen for any man to ſet light by their cenſures.[c]

And now, would not one expect that ſuch perſons ſhould, as the apoſtle commands, be *highly eſteemed by Chriſtians for their works' ſake*, as well as for their maſter's ſake?

I wiſh it might be ſaid with any truth, that the generality of Chriſtians are truly ſenſible of the great bleſſing of a *regular ſtanding miniſtry*. But the truth is, the wicked pains which too many take to defeat this gracious deſign of God for their good, and the too

[b] Luke x. 16. [c] Matth. xviii. 17.

little regard for their adminiſtrations and godly admonitions, which others diſcover, ſhould in all reaſon make Chriſtians aſhamed of their iniquities, and afraid of the conſequence, namely, *the removing their candleſtick*; that is, unchurching them.

The next merciful proviſion which God has made to preſerve true religion amongſt men, is that of the Sabbath. One day in ſeven is expreſsly commanded by God himſelf to be kept holy; that is, to be employed in hearing God's word, in begging his pardon and bleſsing, in giving him thanks for his mercies, and in learning how to pleaſe him here, that we may be happy hereafter.

Let us now ſee how the generality of Chriſtians obſerve this command of God—*Remember that thou keep holy the ſabbath day*. Why, truly, juſt as they do the reſt of God's favours. Some make it a day of idleneſs; others of ſinful pleaſures; many go to church merely for form's ſake, and many to avoid the imputation of having no religion; ſome will go only when they are in humour, when the preacher pleaſes them, when they have nothing elſe to do; and of thoſe that do go conſtantly, how few ſeem to be truly affected with the bleſſed opportunity of approaching God! How few go with a ſincere deſire to be informed of their duty! How few behave themſelves with the humility and reverence of people that know they are in the houſe of God; that acknowledge

knowledge themſelves to be miſerable ſinners, and know that they are for ever undone, if God does not pardon them! How few ſeem to be truly thankful for the mercies they have received, or truly ſenſible of the bleſſings they ſtand in need of!

And is it not for want of *thus* approaching God, with diſpoſitions becoming *his* majeſty, and *our* miſerable condition, that too many return from God's houſe without a bleſſing; and very many, it is to be feared, without ſo much as aſking a bleſſing?

Let us conſider the other *means of grace.* We ſay, *the ſacraments are neceſſary to ſalvation.* Do the generality of Chriſtians ſeem to believe them, in good earneſt, to be ſo? Why, truly, as to the firſt, Chriſtians are generally very careful to have their children baptiſed; and very ready to promiſe for them, that thoſe conditions which God requires of perſons to be baptiſed, ſhall be obſerved when they come to age: and then they ſuppoſe, that they have done their duty, though they never think of this promiſe themſelves, nor take any great care that their children ſhall either know or perform it. Through which wretched careleſſneſs of too many parents, it comes to paſs, that they who by baptiſm have been made *the children of God, and heirs of heaven,* inſtead of continuing ſuch, have become the children of the devil, and heirs of damnation.

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We all know, that this is not the pattern ſet us in ſacred ſcripture. *I know*, ſaith God of Abraham, *that he will teach his children to keep the way of the Lord.* And they that neglect to do ſo, will have reaſon to repent, when they find not that comfort in their children which they hoped for; and when their children will wiſh they had never been born.

To prevent this, and to provide a remedy againſt the careleſſneſs of too many parents, the church has ordered, that as ſoon as children come to years of diſcretion, they ſhall be brought to be CONFIRMED; that is, the church will then be ſatisfied, and that from their own mouths, whether they know what a ſolemn vow, promiſe, and profeſſion, was made in their name at their baptiſm; and whether they will ratify and confirm the ſame in their own perſons? Which if they do ſincerely, they become compleat members of the church of Chriſt, and have a right to all the bleſſings of being ſuch; which are, the forgiveneſs of all their paſt ſins; the manifold graces of God's Holy Spirit; and an aſſurance of everlaſting life and happineſs, if they ſhall be careful to keep the vows they now take upon them.

And now, would not one expect to ſee all parents very thankful for ſuch a bleſſed opportunity of having their children ſet out as they ſhould do, ſo as living or dying to be a comfort to them? But, inſtead of this, inſtead of being ſolicitous to have their children duly

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prepared for this ordinance, too many parents are very little concerned whether their children are inſtructed or not, whether they are confirmed, nay, whether they are likely to be ſaved or damned. And thoſe very parents, who would be in the greateſt affliction to ſee their children made ſlaves for life, can yet be content to ſee them in danger of being ſlaves of hell to all eternity; which they are ſure to be, if they are not inſtructed how to live ſo as to pleaſe God.

This is an occaſion of grief to all ſerious Chriſtians: and all Chriſtians ſhould be aſhamed of ſuch ſtupid careleſſneſs.

The great end of confirmation is, to *prepare young Chriſtians for the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper*. That as often as that ſacrament ſhall be adminiſtered, they may have an opportunity of making their peace with God, of obtaining his pardon for any ſins they may have fallen into, of renewing their vows, and obtaining ſuch farther degrees of grace as are neceſſary for their preſent condition.

Here, if ever, one would expect to find all who profeſs chriſtianity very *ſerious*, and very *ſincere*; very *conſtant*, and very *devout*, at this ſacrament.

The command is plain and poſitive: *Do this in remembrance of me*—of ME, your redeemer—of ME, who am going to lay down my life for you. The duty is eaſy to be underſtood by the meaneſt capacity; and eaſy

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to be performed by all that are willing to lead a godly life.

All Chriſtians are bound, at the peril of their ſouls, to obſerve this ordinance of Chriſt. *The bleſſings* which attend the worthy receiving this ſacrament are invaluable,--no leſs than the pardon of all our paſt ſins; the continuance of God's holy ſpirit; the increaſe of his graces here, and eternal happineſs hereafter. And laſtly, the neglect or abuſe of this ordinance will be puniſhed with judgments in this world, and in the world to come with miſery unſpeakable.

Notwithſtanding all this, this ordinance is very much neglected, and much profaned by too many—by too many, who would tremble to think of renouncing the Chriſtian religion; who yet do in effect renounce the *communion of ſaints*, by turning their backs upon this ordinance. Not now to mention the ſtrange indifference which too many diſcover, who come to the Lord's ſupper; not conſidering, that it is as much the food of their ſouls, and as neceſſary for their ſpiritual growth, as their daily bread is for the ſupport of their bodies.

And what do you think the conſequence of this indifference will be? Why, aſſure yourſelves, the very ſame with that mentioned by the Evangeliſt;[d] when the king came to ſee the gueſts, *and ſaw there a man that had not on him a wedding garment*; that is, one who profeſſed to be a diſciple of Chriſt, but yet behaved

[d] Matth. xxii. 12.

haved himſelf very unworthy of ſuch a maſter; the king, therefore, ordered him firſt to be turned out of his houſe as an hypocrite, and then to be caſt into *outer darkneſs*, where there is nothing but *weeping and gnaſhing of teeth*.

And now, good chriſtians, I have ſhewed you *your pattern*. I have ſet before you the deſign of chriſtianity, and the means appointed by God himſelf for bringing that deſign about. That he has given us his holy word, by which we come to the knowledge of him and his glorious perfections,—that he is infinitely *good*, and therefore to be loved above all things; that he is infinitely *juſt*, and therefore at our peril not to be offended; that he is infinite *in power*, and therefore to be feared. By that word alſo we come to know our own condition; that we are ſadly fallen from that ſtate in which we were created; that we are become the objects of God's anger, and of his compaſſion; that he is pleaſed to offer us pardon upon the moſt reaſonable terms; and has given us all poſſible aſſurance, that if we make *this word* the rule of our faith and manners, we ſhall be the care of his holy angels while we live, and be very happy when we die. That to bring this about, he calls us by his miniſters to repentance. By them, (that is, by baptiſm adminiſtered by them) we are admitted into his houſhold, which is the church, by which we become his children, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. That if we

we are ſo unhappy as to offend him after this, he will notwithſtanding be reconciled to us upon our pleading his Son's atonement, repreſented in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper.

By all this, you ſee what God has done for us, and what more he will do for us, if it is not our own fault.

You have ſeen likewiſe, how the generality of Chriſtians are affected with this love of God, and his tender concern for them. That t is too often with difficulty that they will be brought to conſider theſe things with any ſerioufneſs. That they act as if they thought they did not ſtand in need of theſe *means of grace*; either altogether neglecting them, or uſing them with indifference.

To many, the Lord's day is a burthen;—*prayer* is diſcharged as if it were a taſk, and not a privilege;—the ſacraments are uſed as common things, and as if no ſpecial bleſſings were annexed to them.

In ſhort, you have been ſhewn, that too, too many content themſelves with an outward performance of a few religious duties, without ever conſidering, that, unleſs the heart be changed, all other ſhews of religion will never qualify a man for heaven and happineſs.

And yet *heaven* and *happineſs*, as faint as our belief of them is, and as unconcerned as the generality of Chriſtians are about them, are what we all *hope* for,—I wasgoing to ſay, *what we all make ourſelves ſure of* Now, this

is

is a matter in which, if we deceive ourſelves, we are for ever undone.

To prevent this, as I have in part ſhewed you *our pattern*, and how far too many Chriſtians come ſhort of it; and therefore (if they be not aſhamed, and mend) will come ſhort of heaven; ſo I would, before I conclude, put you in mind of a few truths, very proper to make us all more ſerious and concerned to be, what we all profeſs to be, *Chriſtians indeed.*

The apoſtle obſerved to the Jews, *that they were not all Iſrael, that were of Iſrael.* The carnal Jew expected God's favour, becauſe he was of Abraham's ſeed, and of Abraham's religion. The carnal Chriſtian has the ſame falſe hopes; he bleſſes God that he is a Chriſtian, and hopes for ſalvation without loving God or parting with his ſins.

Faith and obedience, therefore, muſt never be ſeparated. A fruitleſs faith is of no more value than a fruitleſs tree; you all know the fate of it; *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground.*

To *hope* much, and *do* little, is too much the way of the world; but be aſſured of it, (good Chriſtians) wherever there is a *true faith*, and a *well-grounded hope*, there will always be a proportionable concern to do what God has commanded. And wherever there is *ſuch a concern*, and a *real deſire* to do the will of God, there will always be a proportionable degree of knowledge, grace, and aſſiſtance, given by God;

God; ſo that no Chriſtian muſt ever ſay, that he cannot do the things which he is commanded.

And for our comfort we may remember, that Chriſtian perfection does not conſiſt in having no failings, but in ſtriving againſt them always, and not ſuffering them to get the dominion over us.

And becauſe *humility* is a grace moſt acceptable to God, let this conſideration be ever preſent with us, that if we really did do the things we are commanded, and as we ſhould do them; we muſt, as our Lord bids us, ſay, *We are unprofitable ſervants*, we have but done that which is our duty; and if God ſhall think fit to give us any reward, it is of mere grace that he does ſo. So that when we ſerve God, let us remember that we ſerve ourſelves much more.

And it is fit we ſhould know that although God has not tied himſelf to ordinances, yet he has bound us to the uſe of them; and that Chriſtian will be ſadly deceived, who ſhall expect grace, or pardon, or aſſiſtance, or heaven, without a ſincere obſervance of the means of grace.

But then, let us beware that we do not reſt in a *form of religion*, without *feeling the power* of religion: for, moſt certainly, imperfect converſions, a mere formal religion, a zeal for leſſer duties, a forſaking of ſcandalous ſins and indulging of others, will in the end be found

found as hazardous as the moſt profligate life. A profligate ſinner may be ſtartled by God's judgment; but a ſinner who thinks himſelf ſafe, what *can* convince him? And indeed (as one very truly obſerves) thoſe are not the greateſt enemies to religion that are moſt irreligious;—a formal Chriſtian may do more hurt than an atheiſt.

To conclude this diſcourſe. The great end of religion is, *to reſtore us to the favour of God*, from which we are ſadly fallen. If our religion does not do this; if it does not make us more humble, more fearful of offending God, more concerned to do what we know will pleaſe him, more holy, juſt, and charitable, than we are by nature; we had as good to have no religion.

THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF. *This* is our *law* and our *pattern*; this is what every Chriſtian is to aim at; and God will proportion every Chriſtian's reward, according as he ſhall ſincerely ſtrive to come up to this rule.

That we may all reſolve to do ſo; let us ſeriouſly conſider the great importance of thoſe words of Chriſt, *Many are called, but few are choſen*; that is, Many profeſs Chriſtianity, but, of thoſe many, few will be ſaved, becauſe they do not live up to the rules of the goſpel: *this*, if any thing, *will make us ſerious*.

And

And may God, who has bleſſed us with a knowledge of our duty, and the happineſs we are capable of, and with ſufficient means of attaining it; may he *put his fear into our hearts*, and ſuffer us not to content ourſelves with bare ſhadows of religion, without endeavouring after *that holineſs without which no man muſt ſee the Lord.*

Grant this, O God, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, our bleſſed Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON X.

THE SHAME AND DANGER OF BEING CHRISTIANS WITHOUT CHRISTIANITY.

EZEKIEL xliii. 10.

THOU SON OF MAN, SHEW THE HOUSE TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY MAY BE ASHAMED OF THEIR INIQUITIES: AND LET THEM MEASURE THE PATTERN.[a]

I Made choice of theſe words, in order to oblige Chriſtians to reflect upon their own conduct, and the danger *they* are in who lead a life contrary to what they believe and profeſs.

I was ſure it was a moſt proper method, becauſe the Spirit of God directed the prophet to do the ſame;—*To ſhew the houſe of Iſrael their pattern, that they might meaſure it*; that is, take particular notice of it, *and be aſhamed* when they ſhould ſee with their own eyes how ſadly they come ſhort of it.

I conſidered alſo what an effect the like method had upon king David, when, forgetting himſelf and his God, he had taken the wife of Uriah; and how truly he judged, that the

[a] See Pſal. i. 21. Jer. vii. 9. Ezek. xx. 4; and xxii. 2. Matth. vii. 14. John xiii. 15. Phil. i. 27. 1 Theſſ. ii. 12. 1 John i. 6, &c. viii. 12.

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rich man deſerved no mercy, who had ſo barbarouſly taken away a poor man's only lamb for his uſe, when he had enough of his own; and laſtly, how bitterly the king repented of his ſin, when the prophet made him ſenſible *that this was his own caſe*.

The way I took in my former diſcourſe on theſe words, to convince Chriſtians of *the ſhame and danger of being Chriſtians without Chriſtianity*, and that as far as they come ſhort of their pattern, ſo far they will moſt certainly come ſhort of that happineſs which God has promiſed his faithful ſervants, was this:—I firſt ſhewed, that the great deſign of the goſpel was to make men holy, that they might be capable of being happy. Then I explained the means which God has appointed to bring that deſign about; ſuch are, his Word and Sacraments, his Miniſters, and his Sabbaths. After this, I ſhewed—how little the generality of Chriſtians are affected with this gracious deſign of God for their good, how little they eſteem it, and how indifferently they comply with the means ordained by God for bringing that deſign about. This I did to awaken Chriſtians into a ſenſe of the danger they are in, if they ſhould continue to deſpiſe ſo great means of ſalvation.

The next thing I propoſed, was to ſet before you, in one ſhort view, your pattern, *with reſpect to the things required on our part to fit us for heaven and happineſs*. And this is what

what I purpoſe, by God's bleſſing, to do at this time.

Now the things required on our part are FAITH and REPENTANCE. To believe in God, and to keep his commandments, is what every chriſtian promiſes when he is baptized.

We will firſt conſider, *what it is which we profeſs to believe*. We profeſs to believe of God, that he is infinite in *power*;—that we depend on him for life, and breath, and all things;—that he *knows* and *ſees* every thing that is done;—that he is perfectly *holy*, and cannot but be diſpleaſed with every thing that is wicked or unjuſt;—that he is infinitely *juſt*, in puniſhing ſuch as abuſe his goodneſs;—for his goodneſs is ſuch, that he cannot command any thing which is not abſolutely neceſſary for the happineſs of his creatures; and laſtly, that he is moſt *faithful* and *true*, and will make good all his promiſes.

Now; the duties which ſhould follow from the knowledge and belief of theſe things, are theſe: that we ſhould *fear* this great God; that we ſhould fear to offend him above all things;—that we ſhould *love* him with all our heart, foraſmuch as all the bleſſings we enjoy, or hope for, are the effect of his goodneſs;—that we ſhould keep his commandments, it being our intereſt as well as duty to do ſo;—that we ſhould be thankful for his favours, never murmur at what he orders for us;—depend upon his word and promiſes;—and

honour and reverence every thing that belongs to him.

If our faith in God has not theſe effects, it is ſurely not ſuch as it ſhould be. For *to believe* is to be perſuaded of the truth of the thing we believe.

But can it be ſaid with any truth, that Chriſtians do generally live as if they were really perſuaded of the truth of thoſe things which yet they profeſs to believe? For if men are not at all afraid of offending God, and of breaking his laws, it cannot be ſaid, that they are convinced that God will puniſh ſinners, and that he ſees all their ways.

Will Chriſtians, who live at all adventures without fear and without concern, ſay, that they verily believe, and are perſuaded, that joys unſpeakable will be the portion of good men, and that unutterable miſeries will be the lot of the wicked?

Will a man ſay that he loves God with all his ſoul, whoſe conſcience tells him, that he loves many things better; that he ſeldom thinks of God, and that he takes little care to pleaſe him?

Shall we pretend to ſay, *that we put our whole truſt in God*, when we ſeldom aſk for his guidance and bleſſing; when we value not his promiſes, nor are careful to perform the conditions on which all his promiſes are made?

How do we expreſs our dependence upon God, when we are not careful to pray to him for

for what we want, and forget to give him thanks for the mercies we every day receive from him?

With what aſſurance will a man ſay, *that he fears him who can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell*, who will act againſt his conſcience for the fear of man, or to avoid any wordly inconvenience?

Laſtly; Will any man ſay, that he honours God, who upon every occaſion takes his name in vain; who ſets no value upon his word or ordinances; who deſpiſes his miniſters and his ſabbaths?

Theſe things are ſo inconſiſtent with what we profeſs to believe of God, that Chriſtians only want to reflect a very little, and to compare their doings with their pattern, to fill them with ſhame and confuſion.

And ſo it would, in the next place, if they would but conſider what they profeſs to believe concerning JESUS CHRIST, and the way of ſalvation *by him* made known to us.

We acknowledge him to be the Son of God;—that God ſent him to make his will known to us;—that he taught us, both by his word and example, how to live and to pleaſe God. He knew that we could never be happy till we were reſtored to the favour of God, which we never could be, till we ſhould be reſtored to his image. In order to this he propoſes to us—the forgiveneſs of all our ſins, upon our ſincere repentance,—the aſſiſtance of

God's Holy Spirit, to renew what is amiſs in us,—and eternal happineſs after death.

To convince us of the *evil of ſin*, and to make us abhor and flee from it, he aſſures us, that ſinners will have their portion with devils, if they do not make their peace with God by a timely repentance.

To prevail with God to accept of their repentance, he laid down his life for us; (for no leſs a ſacrifice would be accepted) and that we might not be for ever miſerable.

To convince us more effectually, by his own example, of what moment theſe things are to us, and of what little value this world is in compariſon of that which is to come, HE, the Lord of all things, made choice of a life of poverty, humility, afflictions, reſignation, and ſelf-denial; renouncing all thoſe pleaſures and advantages, which the world values, and is fond of.

And laſtly; that he might make his precepts and example effectual to our ſalvation, he receives us into his family, inſtructs us by his miniſters, guides us by his Spirit, protects us by his angels, and is our mediator with God for all the bleſſings we want and pray for.

And now let us conſider, what are the conſequences of this tender concern of our Saviour for us? What are the effects of our belief of theſe things? Shall we ſay that the generality of Chriſtians do make the life of Chriſt their pattern; and are verily perſuaded that all his doctrines

doctrines are moſt true; that his precepts are moſt neceſſary to fit us for heaven; his promiſes of grace and aſſiſtance upon our ſincere prayers, and of pardon upon our repentance, to be entirely depended upon; and laſtly, his account of a judgment to come, of the joys of heaven, and of the torments of hell, moſt certain?

Would to God we could ſay, with truth, that Chriſtians are generally convinced of theſe things, and that they live accordingly. But how can we ſay ſo, when we ſee too, too many very indifferent whether theſe things are true or not; and moſt of all, who acknowledge them to be true, and yet will not be perſuaded to live as they know and believe they ought to do?

To inſtance in ſome particulars. We believe that Jeſus Chriſt *has brought life and immortality to light through the goſpel*;[b] that is, he has made known to us the certainty of a future and an eternal ſtate after death. Now this ſhould, in all reaſon, oblige Chriſtians to conſider things *as they have reſpect to eternity*. But is this the fruit of our faith? On the contrary, we live as if this were to be our everlaſting home;—we deſire to ſet up our reſt here;—and we ſeldom think of, ſeldomer provide for, a life to come.

Are Chriſtians perſuaded, that as ſoon as they die, they ſhall go to a place either of happineſs or miſery, according as they have lived

[b] 2 Tim. i. 10.

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in this world? If they *do* believe this, it is certain they do not often think of it. And yet Jeſus Chriſt aſſures us it will be ſo; and that a Chriſtian ought to part with any thing, as *dear to him as a right hand or a right eye*, rather than provoke God to ſend him to hell.

Then, for the example he has ſet us, we know with what a ſmall ſhare of the world he was ſatisfied, though all nature was at his command. We hear him every where exhorting, and even requiring, his followers—to take up the croſs, to deny themſelves, to mortify their corrupt affections,—as ever they hope to be happy hereafter. If there are any of his followers, who never think they have enough of this world; who aim at nothing ſo much as to be eaſy, to meet with no croſſes, to have whatever their hearts deſire; who will not deny themſelves any ſatisfaction; it will not ſure be ſaid, that ſuch Chriſtians take Jeſus Chriſt for their pattern, or that he will ever own them for his followers.

It is upon the account of the great things our Saviour has done for us, that the apoſtle ſays, *If any man love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let him be Anathema Maranatha*; that is, accurſed, when the Lord comes to judgment. How do Chriſtians ſhew that they love him? I will tell you how they ſhould ſatisfy themſelves in this, that they do love him ſincerely. If they love his humility, his patience, his ſelf-denial, and ſtrive to imitate them; if they

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hate that ſin, which for our ſake coſt him his life; laſtly, if they deſire to know what will pleaſe him, and, when they know the things which he has commanded, do endeavour to do them; then they have that very teſtimony of their love, which Jeſus Chriſt requires; all others being nothing but deluſion.

To conclude this particular. Chriſtians profeſs to *live by faith.* They ſhould know in the firſt place, that *faith is the gift of God,* and to be prayed for. If they neglect to do this, and to put themſelves into a capacity of receiving the grace of God, they muſt not wonder if God denies them his grace.

A Chriſtian may know certainly whether he lives by faith or not. If he lives as in the preſence of God, fearful of offending him, concerned to pleaſe him; when the promiſes and threats of the goſpel affect us; when the fear of hell hinders us from following forbidden pleaſures; when the hope of heaven keeps us from doating upon the appearances of happineſs we meet with here; when the *belief of a judgment to come* makes us watchful over our thoughts, deſigns, words, and actions: in one word, when we govern ourſelves by the rules of the goſpel, it is then we *live by faith,* and ſhall moſt certainly obtain the end of our faith, even the ſalvation of our ſouls.

We ſhall now conſider Chriſtians in the ordinary duties of life, and ſee how they follow their *rule,* their *pattern,* with reſpect to the commands

commands of God; that if we find a too general departure from the rules ſet us to walk by, we may conſider what it will end in.

Now Chriſtians are repreſented in ſcripture, as *a people called from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*; who, having renounced the world, the fleſh, and the devil, are no longer ſubject to them, but are holy in their lives, juſt in their dealings, and charitable to one another; who keep a careful watch over themſelves, and againſt their ſpiritual enemies; praying continually for grace to withſtand them; having their eye always upon the prize of their high calling, the joy ſet before them; dreading, at the ſame time, the diſmal conſequences of miſcarrying.

It is impoſſible to conſider this account of chriſtianity with any ſort of ſerioufneſs, without making very melancholy reflections with reſpect both to ourſelves and others.

When one ſees many Chriſtians as ignorant of God and of their duty as the very heathens, who are ſtill in darkneſs and under the power of Satan: when one ſees Chriſtians as careleſs, as indifferent, and as ſecure, as if there were nothing to be feared, nothing to be hoped for: when one ſees Chriſtians praying for the pardon of their ſins, for grace to amend their lives, for deliverance from eternal miſery, and for the joys of heaven, with the indifference of people that are not concerned to be heard: when one ſees them as fond of the world, as

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if they had vowed never to forſake it; as if God deſigned, as if God could give them no better inheritance: when one conſiders theſe things, one cannot but ſay that ſuch Chriſtians forget their pattern, and that they are in the way to ruin.

To be a little more particular; and to begin with the duties we owe to our neighbour. Would a ſtranger to our religion imagine, that Chriſtians had any ſuch command as this; *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf*; when he ſhould ſee it every day violated in a thouſand inſtances? And would he not be aſtoniſhed, when he ſhould be aſſured, that this is one of thoſe two commands, upon the keeping of which their eternal ſalvation does depend? When he ſhould ſee Chriſtians, who profeſs to believe this, ſo far from being juſt, (for inſtance) that they muſt often be compelled to give every man what is his due, and muſt be hindered by a ſuperior power from doing hurt to their neighbour;—who make no conſcience of doing wrong,—of uſing deceit and fraud,—of taking advantage of the ignorance and neceſſities of others,—of injuring their neighbours by falſe witneſs, by ſpreading reports, and paſſing judgments, which are contrary to truth and charity. And laſtly, who, when they have done wrong, or given offence, refuſe to make reſtitution, though they know for certain their repentance will never be accepted without ſuch ſatisfaction and amends. Chriſtians

tians know very well, that all theſe things are contrary to that love which they owe to their neighbour; that it is doing to others what they would not have done to themſelves; that it is at the peril of their ſouls when they do them.

If Chriſtians have too often ſo little regard to *juſtice*, ſhall we ſuppoſe that they will have a greater regard to that *charity*, which by the laws of the goſpel is due to their neighbour; —that they will *forgive*, and *give*, and *love*, as becomes the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt? and yet no leſs than the ſalvation of our ſouls depends upon this: *He ſhall have judgment without mercy that hath ſhewed no mercy*, ſaith the Apoſtle. And our Lord hath expreſsly declared, that at the day of judgment, ſuch as have had no compaſſion for their poor brethren ſhall have no favour from God.

If we deſcend to *particular duties*, we ſhall find them as much neglected, as if God had given no commands concerning them.

We ſhall find, for inſtance, too many children regardleſs of the authority of their parents, diſpoſing of themſelves as if they were their own maſters, refuſing to be corrected, hating to be adviſed; and too many parents utterly unconcerned for the good education of their children in the fear of God.

We ſhall find ſubjects obedient, not out of conſcience, but for fear of puniſhment; defrauding the publick, ſpeaking evil of dignities; as well as too many in authority, who

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diſcover a very little zeal for the glory of God, (whoſe miniſters they are) when they puniſh the ſins againſt men with much greater ſeverity than thoſe againſt God.

We ſhall find paſtors and their inſtructions deſpiſed, and the authority of Jeſus Chriſt rejected in the perſons of his miniſters; and theſe alſo forgetting the end of their calling, to watch over their flock, to inſtruct, to reprove, and to pray for them.

We ſhall find huſbands and wives as careleſs of their marriage vows, as if God, who was called to witneſs when they made them, was not able to puniſh them for their perjury.

Laſtly, we ſhall find chriſtian ſervants unfaithful to their maſters; and theſe again forgetting that they have a maſter in heaven.

Now, they that are thus regardleſs of their duty, and feel no uneaſineſs, no ſtings of conſcience; they muſt be very ignorant, or given up to *a reprobate mind.*

Let us, in the laſt place, conſider the duties we owe to *ourſelves*, and ſee whether we diſcharge theſe any better than thoſe we owe to our neighbour. Now, the firſt and great duty which we owe to ourſelves, is, to *take care of our ſouls.* Chriſtians would not hear a man with patience, who ſhould ſay, that people need not mind their ſalvation; and yet if we muſt ſpeak the truth, we muſt ſay, that the generality of Chriſtians do not take any care of their ſouls; that is, they do not mind thoſe rules

rules which are abſolutely neceſſary to fit them for heaven and happineſs.

For, let me aſk again, are the generality of Chriſtians to be known from infidels by their *ſelf-denial*, *patience*, *humility*, *purity*, and *charity?* And yet without theſe graces and virtues no man can be happy. *If any man will come after me*, (ſaith our Saviour) *let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs daily, and follow me.* Is this no longer a chriſtian duty?

The intent of our bleſſed Lord in this command is, to wean our affections from this world, and to ſubdue them, that God may take poſſeſſion of our ſouls, and by his Holy Spirit fit them for eternal happineſs. And therefore all thoſe Chriſtians, which are too plainly the greateſt number, who give way to their inclinations, who follow not what is moſt pleaſing to God, but to corrupt nature, are, without any doubt, in the way of perdition.

Where is that *reſignation to the will of God*, which reaſon as well as religion has made our duty? We pray, indeed, THAT GOD'S WILL MAY BE DONE; but we are angry when it is done, and in effect charge him with injuſtice, when he would puniſh us in this life, that he may not be obliged to do it in the next; or when he would prevent or cure a diſorder, which if not done would infallibly ruin us.

The promiſe of *ſeeing* God is made to *the pure and clean of heart*, and to theſe only. What then muſt become of that infinite num-

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ber of people, whoſe hearts are full of all impurity; who entertain ſuch thoughts as defile the ſoul, and make it utterly unfit for the Spirit of God to be there? Muſt we not ſay, that all ſuch are excluded from the promiſe of ſeeing God? And if an impure heart will ſhut us out of heaven, impure actions will make us fit for no place but hell.

We may ſhut our eyes and our ears againſt ſuch affrighting truths; but as ſure as God has made his will known to us, this will be the iſſue of ſuch a life: *No unclean perſon ſhall have any inheritance in the kingdom of Chriſt, and of God; but ſhall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone.*

Laſtly; what ſhall we ſay of thoſe many Chriſtians, who lead an idle and an uſeleſs life; or of thoſe who are indeed induſtrious, but it is only to be more rich, that they may be more miſerable? Do ſuch people conſider, that they are Chriſtians,—that they have an intereſt to ſecure, on which their ALL depends,—and that it is in this life their lot is determined either for heaven or for hell?

You will ſay, perhaps, that Chriſtians know all this; but then it muſt be acknowledged, that they that do know theſe things, and yet live as if they did not believe them, that their condemnation and judgment will be moſt ſevere as well as juſt.

To prevent this, I have ſet before you and myſelf our pattern; I have ſhewed you how very

very little the generality of Chriſtians do mind it: and this I have done, not to expoſe the weakneſs and corruption of human nature, but to awaken us all into a ſerious ſenſe of the bad condition of thoſe who live without God in the world: and that every one of us, ſeeing how ſadly we come ſhort of our pattern, may be aſhamed and afraid too, leſt our repentance and amendment ſhould come too late. And laſtly, that ſuch Chriſtians as have made the life and the doctrine of Chriſt their pattern, may by this repreſentation have the comfort of ſeeing that they are not of the number of thoſe unhappy people, who content themſelves with the bare name of Chriſtians, with mere ſhadows of religion and piety, without endeavouring after that *holineſs without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

And now, you ſee plainly, that to be a Chriſtian, and a *true* Chriſtian, are two very different things.

A TRUE CHRISTIAN ſets his pattern before his eyes; and, becauſe his ſalvation depends on it, he reſolves to make it the rule of his life. He ſtudies therefore the *truths* and the *duties* of the goſpel; prefers the light he meets with there to all others: he reſolves, that what the goſpel declares, *that* he will believe, let what will be ſaid againſt it; that what it recommends, he will follow *that*, and avoid what it forbids. If, upon examining his conſcience, he finds that he does any thing contrary

trary to what the goſpel preſcribes, he is aſhamed and ſorry for it; begs God's pardon, and his grace to obſerve it better for the time to come; watches over his inclinations, avoiding every temptation that may lead him to ſin; never conſulting the world, its authority, its cuſtoms, or its frowns, for what he ought to do, or what to avoid. And by doing this, he ſecures the favour of God, his grace here, and eternal happineſs hereafter.

On the other hand, thoſe Chriſtians who live, as too many do, in a general forgetfulneſs of God; taking no care of their ſouls; contenting themſelves with ſome outward formalities, and bare ſhadows of religion, without feeling its power; who make the world their pattern, notwithſtanding the caution Jeſus Chriſt has given us not to follow its ways and maxims. Such people, under the name of Chriſtians, are very heathens, will be rejected of God, and are reſerved for a puniſhment dreadful to be named.

Chriſtians muſt not, to excuſe themſelves, ſay, that they cannot come up to their pattern, to be what the goſpel requires them to be. It is no leſs than blaſphemy to ſay ſo. For God's grace is ſufficient; his grace may be had for aſking; and he requires no more of us than what (upon our ſincere prayers and endeavours) he will enable us to perform.

To conclude: God has given us a *law*, by which he will judge us; by this law we are to judge

judge what our condition is like to be hereafter, whether happy or miſerable. That we may make this judgment more impartially, let us conſider what our thoughts will be when we come to die. Whether, for inſtance, we ſhall not be in the utmoſt confuſion, when, our life and pattern being ſet before us, it ſhall appear that we have lived in a plain contempt, or neglect at leaſt, of what we profeſſed to believe, what we knew to be our duty, and what we were often put in mind would be the conſequence of neglecting it? Or whether we ſhall then have the comfort of having compared our life with our pattern, ſeen our errors, made our peace with God by a timely repentance, and lived to bring forth fruit anſwerable to amendment of life?

One of theſe two will be the caſe of myſelf, and of every one here preſent; how ſoon, we know not; but it highly concerns us to be prepared for it, and that forthwith, *leſt the night come, when no man can work.*

To this end, let us retire, and beg of God, who has given us our pattern, and who alone can enable us to follow it, to put his fear into our hearts, to give us the grace of repentance, to ſanctify us both in body and ſoul, *that we may be meet to be partakers of an inheritance with the ſaints in light.* Which God grant we may all be, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

Septuageſima, Sexageſima, Quinquageſima, Lent.

FEAR AND CARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY IN OUR WAY TO HEAVEN.

FILL my ſoul, O Lord, with a ſalutary dread of the unfaithfulneſs of my own heart; and, while I am labouring for the ſalvation of others, give me grace to fear for myſelf. Amen.

I PETER i. 17.

PASS THE TIME OF YOUR SOJOURNING HERE IN FEAR.[a]

THESE words are a ſerious admonition to all Chriſtians. I hope, therefore, you will hear them explained with great attention. The plain meaning of them is this:—Foraſmuch as your eternal happineſs or miſery will depend upon your behaviour in this life, it concerns you, as much as your ſouls are worth, to live with great *care and fear*, leſt, when you die, you ſhould be miſerable for ever.

Care and concern (for that is the meaning of *fear* in this place) are neceſſary even in our worldly affairs, if we would not let them go

[a] See Pſ. ii. 11; and xxxix. 1. Luke xii. 37; and xvii. 28. 2 Cor. v. 11; and vii. 1. Eph. v. 15. 1 Theſſ. v. 6. 2 Pet. i. 10.

to ruin. But Chriſtians muſt be ſtrangely careleſs, fearleſs, and unthoughtful, who profeſs to believe a judgment to come, and yet are unconcerned what ſentence their works ſhall deſerve, what ſentence God in juſtice muſt paſs upon them.

And yet all Chriſtians, who are not careful of their lives, who are not fearful of offending God, are in this deſperate condition. They are going headlong to certain ruin, to a ruin that never can be remedied; and yet are fearleſs and unconcerned.

The *duty* therefore, good Chriſtians, which I would explain to you at this time, and which I would charge upon you and upon myſelf, as ever we hope for heaven and happineſs, is this; *to preſerve ourſelves as much as poſſibly we can, and at all times, in a ſerious temper.* This being what the apoſtle means, when he exhorts Chriſtians *to paſs the time of their ſojourning here in fear*; when he bids us in another place,[b] *be ſober, be vigilant.* The ſame which St. Paul adviſes Chriſtians,[c] *to work out their ſalvation with fear and trembling*; that is, with a concern anſwerable to the great work they have to do, and to the loſs they are like to ſuffer, if it be not done. This alſo is what the ſame apoſtle[d] intimates in theſe words: *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall:* that is, let no man be too ſecure of himſelf, leſt he fall when he leaſt thinks of it.

[b] 1 Pet. v. 8. [c] Phil. ii. 12. [d] 1 Cor. x. 12.

This

This is what the Wiſe Man means by ſaying,[e] *Happy is the man that feareth alway*; and that *he is truly a wiſe man, who feareth and departeth from evil.*[f] This is alſo what the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks in other words,[g] *Stand in awe, and ſin not*; intimating, that our great ſecurity lies in an AWFUL FEAR of offending God. And laſtly, this is the meaning of the warning ſo often repeated by our bleſſed Lord; to be always upon our *guard*, to *watch*, to be *ſober*, to *fear him who can deſtroy both body and ſoul.*

Thus you ſee the Holy Spirit, in theſe and in many more places of ſcripture, lays down this for a certain truth, and a truth of the greateſt moment, being ſo often repeated, that *fear, and a ſerious care and concern, are abſolutely neceſſary in our way to heaven.* And that they who have no concern upon their ſpirits, and lay little to heart, are in the ſure way to ruin.

But that you may not miſunderſtand theſe ſcriptures, or imagine, that the fear and concern here recommended conſiſt in a ſourneſs of temper, or a dejected ſpirit; or that this fear muſt neceſſarily be attended with MELANCHOLY, ſadneſs of mind, and a life of ſorrow; I muſt tell you, that it is ſo far from this, that there is nothing more cheerful, no cure for melancholy ſo certain, as a religious fear and concern to pleaſe God.

For this fear ariſes from an awful regard for the commands of a God infinitely holy,

[e] Prov. xxviii. 14. [f] Prov. xiv. 16. [g] Pſal. iv. 4.

juſt, and powerful; who is yet ſo good as to pardon thoſe that return to him in the ſincerity of their heart, and will be careful and deſirous to pleaſe him.

This fear conſiſts in a concern for having offended ſo gracious a Father, with a ſerious reſolution of doing ſo no more. It is a fear of falling into the common vices of the world, attended with a ſober purpoſe of keeping out of the way of temptations. It conſiſts in a juſt ſenſe of our own weakneſs and infirmities, with a full confidence in God's gracious aſſiſtance, when we aſk it in ſincerity.

In ſhort; the fear here ſpoken of, and in which we ought to paſs our whole lives, is a ſerious concern for our eternal welfare, a *care* leſt Setan get an advantage over us, a dread of provoking God, and of forfeiting that grace on which our ſalvation depends.

And *this fear* is formed in our hearts, by conſidering ſeriouſly the greatneſs and majeſty of God, the holineſs of his laws, the great happineſs we are capable of, and the extreme miſery we are liable to if we ſhould miſcarry. By conſidering the enemies we have to deal with, the temptations we are ſure to meet with, the corruptions and inconſtancy of our own nature; and the many ſad inſtances before our eyes, of men ruining themſelves to all intents and purpoſes, for want of thought, and fear, and care, for what muſt become of them when they die.

A man

A man can hardly think of theſe things with ſerioufneſs, but he muſt have ſome fear, ſome concern for himſelf.

Now if this concern diſpoſeth him to hear and receive the truth; if it reſtrain him from evil, and make him deſirous to pleaſe God; why then a man anſwers the purpoſe of God, in putting his fear into his heart; and this fear will be of uſe to him in every circumſtance of life, and become a means both of obtaining and ſecuring the favour of God.

Chriſtians therefore have great reaſon, as ever they hope for the favour of God, to beware how they oppoſe, or ſtrive to ſtifle or divert, *a ſerious temper of mind*, and *a ſalutary fear for themſelves*. For, in the firſt place, it is THAT VERY FRAME OF SPIRIT which God makes uſe of in order to bring us into the way of ſalvation.

By this he repreſents to our minds things of the greateſt concern to us; and, as it were, forces us to conſider them. He ſets before us, on one hand, *eternal happineſs*, as poſſible to be attained by due care, and yet as poſſible to be loſt by negligence and a ſinful ſecurity. On the other hand, having filled our hearts with godly fear, he repreſents *eternal miſery* as the certain portion of wicked men, of careleſs and unthoughtful people.

It is to minds full of this godly fear, that he ſhews men to themſelves, and makes them ſee their ſad and ſinful ſtate, their weakneſs and inconſtancy;

inconſtancy; that they may ſee a neceſſity of fleeing to God for help, or the danger of continuing in a condition which muſt end in ruin. *They that be whole* (ſaith our Saviour) *need not a phyſician, but they that are ſick:* that is, ſuch as conſider their own ailments, and are afraid for themſelves, will look out for help, while ſuch as are under no concern ſit ſtill, and are in danger of being loſt.

People are apt to think, that becauſe they know their duty or their danger, they can eaſily perform the one and avoid the other whenever they pleaſe; but it generally happens, that both duty and danger are neglected, until God awakens the ſoul into a ſenſe of her miſery. And God makes uſe of this paſſion of fear, to make all his other gifts and graces effectual for our ſalvation.

Thus the apoſtle obſerves,[h] *that Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the ſaving of his houſe*; intimating, that his faith, great as it was, ſtood in need of *fear* to quicken it, to make him do what God had commanded him, to ſave himſelf from periſhing with the reſt of the world.

Let us add to this, that this religious fear is what makes us fit objects of God's grace and compaſſion. So ſaith the Spirit expreſsly,[i] *To this man will I look*, (ſaith God) *even to him that trembleth at my word.* And our Lord, by inviting ſuch as are *weary and heavy laden*,

[h] Heb. xi. 7. [i] Iſaiah lxvi. 2.

ſuch

ſuch whoſe miſery has made them concerned and ſerious, *to come unto him*, intimates thus much, that *theſe ſhall find reſt unto their ſouls*, becauſe *theſe* only are prepared to receive it.

Laſtly, It is this ſalutary fear, which makes the duties of Chriſtianity leſs frightful and burthenſome. To break off evil habits; to deny one's ſelf many things which we are but too fond of; to mortify the fleſh, and our ſinful affections; to take up the croſs; theſe are duties which would moſt certainly diſcourage a Chriſtian, if God, by putting his fear into our hearts, did not convince us of the neceſſity of doing any thing to eſcape the wrath to come. For then, let repentance and the difficulties of a new life be never ſo irkſome, a man who conſiders any thing will chooſe them rather than continue under the diſpleaſure of an angry God, who can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell.

And this conſideration (if we reſiſt not the Spirit of God) is often forced upon us, to let us ſee what a careleſs and fearleſs life is like to end in.

And here one cannot but wonder at thoſe who, forgetting this only ſure argument of conviction, endeavour to perſuade men to forſake their evil ways upon the account of the unreaſonableneſs of them, and the worldly inconveniences that attend them.

Alas! our corrupt hearts will not be effectually changed by all that ever can be ſaid upon

upon the worldly inconveniences that will attend our continuing in ſin; and few men but will get over all ſuch reaſons when tempted to ſin.

But who is ſo hardy as to ſlight eternal miſery, and hell fire, when he ſhall be convinced that theſe will be the certain reward of an evil life?

And indeed we have of ourſelves ſo little inclination to lay things to heart, that if God had not ſet before us the terrors of the world to come, and did not fill our hearts with fears of future evils, not one man in ten thouſand would make the leaſt ſtep towards being reconciled to God.

But God has mercifully provided a remedy for this weakneſs and corruption of our nature, by making known to us the certain miſerable portion of wicked men in the life which is to come. And this God has done, in order to awaken us; to make us ſerious; to make the pleaſures of this world leſs palatable and bewitching; to break the force of temptations; and to convince us that the difficulties of a religious life are to be choſen before everlaſting burnings.

And very happy is that man, whoſe fears and thoughtfulneſs have had this bleſſed effect upon him, to bring him from the power of Satan unto God.

But even then we muſt not lay our fear aſide, *Let him* (ſaith the Apoſtle[k]) *that thinketh*

[k] 1 Cor. x. 12.

eth he ſtandeth, and that he ſtandeth out of danger, *take heed leſt he fall*; for he is yet within the reach of temptations; and that very fear and ſeriouſneſs of mind, which brought him into the way of life, will ever be neceſſary to keep and to confirm him in it. This being the beſt diſpoſition by which we may moſt effectually ſecure the grace of God. So ſaith the Pſalmiſt:[1] *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and ſaveth ſuch as are of a contrite ſpirit.*

He is nigh unto them, to bring to their remembrance their former iniquities; to ſhew them the ſad dangers they have eſcaped, and the ſad condition they had been in, had not he vouchſafed them the grace of repentance, and cured them of that ſinful ſecurity which is the ruin of an infinite number of ſouls.

He is nigh unto ſuch, to make them mindful of their infirmities and of their backſlidings, that they may be more importunate for grace for the time to come; that they may *watch* and be *ſober*, and keep the heart with all diligence; which are duties ſo difficult, that nothing but the preſence of God can enable them to go through.

Beſides all this; this ſerious temper is generally attended with a *tenderneſs of conſcience*, a bleſſing which we ſhould very highly value, if we would but conſider its advantages.

A temptation may be ſudden. A man may not always have time to weigh the evil tendency

[1] Pſal. xxxiv. 18.

dency of an action; he may not always know what his duty requires of him; but if his conſcience be tender, he will abſtain from all appearance of evil. He will likewiſe keep a faithful watch over himſelf, leſt, by giving way to the leaſt known ſin, he ſoon fall into a much greater.

Such a man will call to mind the torments of a guilty conſcience, the difficulties of a true repentance, the danger of being given over to a reprobate mind; and theſe fearful conſiderations will ſerve—inſtead of *time* to conſider, inſtead of *friends* to adviſe with, inſtead of *knowledge* to direct, in time of temptation.

Add to all this, that a ſerious temper, a thoughtful heart, will contribute very much to make us devout; without which no man muſt hope to be ſaved.

If a man fear God's diſpleaſure, he will often ſupplicate his mercy. The fear of offending God will put us upon aſking his grace upon every occaſion;—the fear of our enemies will force us to beg of God his help and protection;—and the fear of being ungrateful will mind us of our duty, to be thankful for every favour we every moment receive. This is to live in dependence upon God, which is the great end of religion, and will preſerve a true peace of mind and conſcience, without which no man can be happy.

A man

A man may indeed lay his conſcience aſleep; may reſolve to ſee no danger, nor believe that his condition is deplorable; and by this means he may enjoy a falſe peace of mind. A man may reject ſuch thoughts as are moſt proper to awaken him into a ſenſe of his miſery, or he may ſilence his conſcience. But peace of conſcience muſt have its beginning from a fear of God, and a firm faith in his word.

God has propoſed terms on which he will be reconciled unto us: theſe terms we receive, and ſolemnly promiſe to obſerve them. We meet with difficulties; this makes us more diligent. Sometimes we fall or go aſtray; this makes us more careful. When God ſees us doing our beſt, he pities and forgives us. This makes us ſtill more deſirous to pleaſe him; ſerious in praying for aſſiſtance; avoiding all temptations which may draw us from his ſervice, always fearing, as the apoſtle adviſes,[m] *leſt a promiſe being made us of entering into his reſt, we ſhould come ſhort of it.*

So that the more fearful a Chriſtian is for himſelf, and of offending God, the more aſſurance he has of being in God's favour, and the greater peace of conſcience: ſo ſaith the Spirit expreſsly of the firſt Chriſtians;[n] *They walked in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt.*

Directly contrary to this are the fruits of ſecurity, and of a careleſs life: for theſe are,

[m] Heb. iv. 1. [n] Acts ix. 31.

Negligence

Negligence; bold venturing upon temptations; a wicked life; aud a reprobate mind: enough, one would think, to awaken the moſt drowſy ſinner.

And now, good Chriſtians, you ſee how abſolutely neceſſary the apoſtle's direction was, *That we ſhould paſs the time of our ſojourning here* (our whole life) *in fear*; that is, with a concern ſuitable to what we are like to loſe and ſuffer, if we do not do ſo. Might not one expect, therefore, to ſee Chriſtians, who know all this, very thoughtful and inquiſitive about the way of ſalvation;—taking heed to their ways;—abſtaining from all appearance of evil;—always preſerving themſelves in a ſerious and devout temper of mind?

Why truly one might expect this: but experience, ſad experience, ſhews the contrary; and that Chriſtians, the generality of Chriſtians, do live as if there were no manner of danger, nothing to be feared; as if nobody had ever miſcarried; as if fear and circumſpection, and a ſerious temper, had never been enjoined us; but that we ſhould all be happy, all go to heaven when we die, without ever concerning ourſelves how we live.

But be aſſured of it, Chriſtians, that ſobriety, watchfulneſs, a fear of offending God, are duties as neceſſary to ſalvation, as our daily bread is to keep us alive. Neceſſary, I ſay, at all times, for all conditions of life, to people of all ages, in all affairs, in all employments,

ployments, in all our dealings with men, in all our approaches to God, in proſperity, in poverty, and even in the common actions of life. In all theſe circumſtances and conditions, Chriſtians are obliged to live with *fear* and *caution*, as they hope for heaven.

They that are *young*, if they are not brought up in the fear of God, will contract evil habits before they are aware, which may ſtick to them as long as they live, and carry them to hell when they die. And if they that are *old* have been deſtitute of this grace, and neglect to labour and to pray for it with all their might, they muſt ſoon periſh undoubtedly.

If the *rich* have not the fear of God, and a very great ſhare of grace, their riches will be a ſnare and a curſe to them, and will be a means of ſhutting them out of heaven. And even the *poor*, who have ſo many promiſes, and ſo favourable a title to the kingdom of heaven, if they want this grace, will be apt to grow impatient, and endeavour to better their condition by unjuſt ways.

Indeed; we ſhall have perpetual occaſion for this grace, and a ſerious temper.

In our *devotions*; that we may not mock God, and draw near to him with our mouths when our hearts are far from him. That when we go to church without reverence and godly fear, we may know for certain that we return home without his bleſſing.

If

If we want this grace, we ſhall be tempted in our dealings with others, to oppreſs, to defraud, to overreach our brother, not remembering *that the Lord is the avenger of all ſuch.*

Who would expoſe himſelf to any inconveniences, any temporal loſs, to the diſpleaſure of men; who would deny himſelf any pleaſures; who would not enrich himſelf at the coſt of his neighbour; if the fear of God did not reſtrain men?

And therefore we ſay very juſtly, when we ſee men do ſuch things, that they have not the fear of God in their hearts. We ſay ſo, and ſee it in others: would to God we could always ſee it in ourſelves!

In ſhort, as we ſtand in need, every moment, of God's grace and protection, it behoves us to be every moment in a diſpoſition to aſk and to receive his grace; that is, to be ever ſerious and thoughtful. For, as the devil never leaves off to tempt us, ſo muſt we never leave off to watch againſt his temptations and ſnares.

I know what the generality of Chriſtians will be apt to think of all this. Why all this ado? Our lives will be a burden, if we muſt be always upon our guard, always afraid of falling.

Be perſuaded, good Chriſtians, to believe the quite contrary. The fear of God makes men neither ſad, nor ſour, nor melancholy, nor dejected. And if the Wiſe Man may be truſted,

truſted, his advice is,° *Be thou in the fear of God all the day long; for the heart of the righteous is a continual feaſt.*

And whoever hopes to make his life eaſy by caſting away care, and flinging off the fear of God, will infallibly find this effect; either he muſt ſeverely pay for it by a bitter repentance, or he muſt reſolve to periſh eternally.

A Chriſtian who believes this will not ſure ſay, that it is hard for one to be always ſerious, and mindful of their latter end; much leſs to ſay, that he is aſhamed to be ſingular. For that in truth is to ſay, 'I am aſhamed of 'getting from among a crowd of people, who 'I know are in the very way of deſtruction.'

After all; it is not ſo eaſy to poſſeſs our hearts with this concern, with this godly fear, as it is eaſy to adviſe to it. It will be neceſſary, therefore, to lay before you a few very important conſiderations, proper to poſſeſs our hearts with a ſalutary fear for ourſelves.

We ſhould ſtand amazed to hear a man ſay, *that he feared not God, nor what God could do to him!*—But pray, where is the difference betwixt the caſe of ſuch a man, and one who has no concern upon him how he may pleaſe God, or how he may eſcape his anger?

Some men's lives are ſo profligately wicked, that they leave no room even for charity to have any hopes of their ſalvation. They think neither of heaven nor of hell, and their

° Prov. xxiii. 17.

condition

condition is looked upon by every body to be truly deplorable.

At the ſame time, there are Chriſtians, who through multitude of worldly buſineſs, or who having nothing to do but to divert themſelves, or to paſs their lives in pleaſures, do think as little to any ſaving purpoſe of a life to come, as the other; and yet theſe are hardly believed to be in danger.

Men muſt have a ſtrange opinion of religion, when they imagine that there needs little or no care to perform what God requires of us. Would we but conſider, that our ſojourning here on earth is in order to purify our ſouls, and make us fit for heaven when we die, we ſhould ſure think that ſomething more will be required of *us* than of the beaſts that periſh, and that this will require ſome care and ſerious endeavours.

Had we but the courage to aſk ourſelves a few ſuch queſtions as theſe following, we ſhould ſee plainly the miſtake of thoſe who promiſe themſelves heaven, without taking care and pains to fit themſelves for it:—

What was I ſent into the world for? What have I been doing ever ſince I came into it? I profeſs to believe that when I die, I ſhall be either happy or miſerable, and that this will depend upon my behaviour here. Has my behaviour been regulated according to the rules ſet me by God, who is to reward me?

As

As ſoon as I came to know myſelf, and my own nature, I found it extremely corrupt:—Have I taken pains to mend it?

I came into a very corrupt world:—Have I been afraid for myſelf, and of being made worſe by its evil example?

I found myſelf weak, and ſubject to fall: Did I continually implore the Divine aſſiſtance, whoſe aſſiſtance was promiſed me when I ſhould beg it ſincerely?

God has promiſed to pardon ſinners upon their repentance; but has my repentance been followed by amendment of life?

I am aſſured, that whoever is truly ſenſible of the mercy and goodneſs of God, cannot chooſe but love him with all the heart. Have I been careful to call to mind the inſtances of his goodneſs to me? Have I taken pains to conquer that perverſeneſs of my nature, which is unwilling to forgive others, though my own pardon depends upon it?

A few ſuch queſtions as theſe will awaken a man into a ſenſe of his danger, if his life has not been a ſtate of care and concern for his everlaſting welfare.

In ſhort; Heaven and happineſs is what every ſoul of us depends on; and we ſhould any of us be filled with unſpeakable horror, if we had not hopes of being ſaved when we die.

Let us have the patience but to aſk this ſhort queſtion,—Why do I hope for ſalvation? If I have indeed thought of it with ſeri-

ouſneſs, if I have laboured for it with diligence, if I have been afraid of miſcarrying, if I have duly prayed for God's aſſiſtance, and have cloſed with the means of ſalvation which he has ordained; why then I may hope for ſalvation from a merciful God. But to hope for happineſs without doing any thing to obtain it, is the hope of madmen, or of hypocrites, whoſe ſentence has already been paſſed: *Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs.—Cut down the unfruitful tree; why cumbereth it the ground?*

Let then every Chriſtian who hopes for happineſs conſider, What the conditions are on which God has promiſed his ſervants eternal happineſs;—how many have been ruined for not performing theſe conditions. Then let him conſider what the Spirit of God hath declared, *that broad is the way, and wide is the gate, that leadeth to deſtruction*; and what if it ſhould be my ſad lot to be one of thoſe many that go in thereat?

Have I no reaſon to fear miſcarrying? Have I no enemies to be afraid of? Has the world no longer any ſnares, no temptations? Is Satan no longer *a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour*; finding them off their guard, and from under God's protection? Why then are we ſo often warned, to fear; to be ſober; to be upon our watch continually? Have we no examples of people given up to *work all iniquity with greedineſs?*

But,

But, you will ſay, you have thought of theſe things. And have you, therefore, no longer reaſon to be afraid? Are Chriſtians no longer ſubject to backſlidings? Does not every man's heart witneſs againſt him, that he has often, very often, broke his reſolutions? And is there no fear of doing ſo again?

But God, you ſay, is *infinitely merciful:* indeed he is ſo, or elſe no man would have been ſaved.

But let us Chriſtians conſider, that God is true as well as good; and he will be merciful to us according to the terms he has ſet down in his Holy Word. They that will not ſubmit to theſe terms, muſt inevitably feel the effects of his ſevere juſtice; or elſe, to what purpoſe is the book of God filled with judgments threatened, and judgments executed, upon impenitent ſinners, but to give thoſe that ſurvive juſt impreſſions and reaſons for fear?

And then, if we add to theſe reaſons the manifold tranſgreſſions of our whole lives, the puniſhment of which is only ſuſpended on condition that we repent and perſevere;—if we ſet before our eyes the holineſs of that religion which we profeſs; the Majeſty of God, to whoſe eyes all things are naked and open, who requires of his ſervants a ſincere endeavour after holineſs, and whoſe anger is to be dreaded more than death;—when we conſider that our lives are not in our own power, and that, within a very few years, we

ſhall every ſoul of us be in another world;—verily, whoever dare think of theſe things, and are not concerned and fearful for themſelves; they muſt be ſuch who, as the Prophet ſpeaks,[p] *have made a covenant with death*; that is, who fear no evil, no judgments.

But Chriſtians, who have any concern for themſelves, will ſee their danger, and will proſtrate themſelves before God, and pray him to put and preſerve his fear in their hearts; and to give them all that ſerioufneſs, care, and concern, that is neceſſary to keep them awake, and mindful of what muſt come hereafter.

Theſe duties may indeed diſcourage ignorant people, and ſuch as have no care for their ſouls; for ſuch people look only on the difficulties of a regular life, but know nothing of the happineſs of ſuch a life.

For example:—They do not ſee what ſnares, dangers, and troubles, a Chriſtian eſcapes, who is careful of his ways, and is for that reaſon under the direction of a good Providence.—They do not feel with what peace that Chriſtian lieth down at night, who hath feared and ſhunned every evil of the day paſt; nor with what comfort he riſeth in the morning, who is reſolved, by the grace of God, to walk circumſpectly that whole day. Nor laſtly, will careleſs people believe, with what peace that man will give up the ghoſt, who ſo orders his life, that when his Lord cometh he may be found watching.

All

[p] Iſaiah xxviii. 15.

All ſerious people underſtand, that there is great recompence in ſuch bleſſings as theſe for all their care; and for ſuch as are not yet become ſerious, the beſt ſervice one can do ſuch is to pray with the Pſalmiſt,[q] *Put them in fear, O Lord, that they may know themſelves to be but men*; that they may ſee their great danger, before it be too late to prevent it.

After all, ſome unfortunate people will be apt to think, that their fears are too great already; and that they rather want advice to leſſen them. And indeed it muſt not be denied, but that fear may exceed its juſt bounds, and even hinder our ſerving God as we ought to do. Our great enemy aiming at two things; either to make us careleſs and fearleſs, which is a ſtate of perdition, as you have already heard; or elſe to plunge men into deſpair of obtaining pardon, of overcoming the corruption of their nature, or of pleaſing God by any thing that they can do.

And Satan very often takes advantage of the diſorders of the body, to heighten ſuch people's fears, as far as God ſhall permit him, toward deſpair.

But they that fear God, their comfort is, that they are in the hands of God, and that no power on earth or in hell can touch them any farther than God judges it ſhall be for their eternal advantage.

And this ſhould keep them from impatience, from repining at God's dealings with them,

[q] Pſal. ix. 20.

them, from charging him fooliſhly; and make them more importunate for grace to ſecure them (as far as God thinks fit) from both theſe extremes—from a *ſinful ſecurity*, and from *cauſeleſs fear*; that they may ſerve him *acceptably with reverence and godly fear*.[f]

There is another fear which we are far from recommending, and that is, *a ſlaviſh fear*; ſuch as wicked people, until their conſciences are ſeared, do always labour under—a fear of the vengeance of God for the wickedneſs they are not willing to forſake.

But this ſlaviſh fear is eaſily known from that religious fear recommended in the text. A ſlave looks for no favour when he has done amiſs: he hates the maſter he fears; he is obedient only for fear of puniſhment, and has no concern but to hide his faults. On the contrary, a child of God is afraid indeed when he has done amiſs: but he remembers that *he* is a *father* whom he has offended, and with an humble confidence hopes for his pardon, and loves him the more becauſe he is ſo good as to forgive him.

You ſee by this time, my Chriſtian brethren, what I have aimed at; namely, to recommend to you a *ſerious temper*, which is the true Chriſtian frame of mind and ſpirit. That this conſiſts in loving God, and fearing to offend him; and laſtly, in reſolving to amend wherever we are ſenſible we have done amiſs.

[f] Heb. xii. 28.

I conſider

I conſider that the approaching ſeaſon [LENT] is obſerved by all ſerious Chriſtians with a more than ordinary regard for religious duties.

Many, it is to be hoped, will call themſelves to an account for the errors of their lives paſt, and make ſober reſolutions of amendment for the time to come.

Such as are ſenſible that they have tranſgreſſed through intemperance, have a good occaſion offered them of taking revenge upon themſelves by mortification and ſelf-denial: for miſpending their time, by retirement; and for neglect of duty, by reſolving upon, and ſetting about the duties of their proper calling, with more care and diligence.

Such as have been at variance will take this occaſion of labouring to be reconciled, and to forgive, as they hope for forgiveneſs themſelves at God's hands.

They that are engaged in a ſinful way of living of any kind ſhould conſider, that this may be the laſt opportunity offered them by God, of beginning a repentance not to be repented of.

In ſhort; we ſhould all take this occaſion of conſidering, (and this the moſt ignorant can do, as well as the moſt learned) that we have not long to ſojourn here;—that death is ever at hand, and to be ſurpriſed would be the moſt dreadful thing in the world, for that we ſhall riſe out of the grave juſt as we lie down

drwn in it, either the objects of God's wrath, or of his mercy to all eternity;—that therefore we ſhould at all times endeavour to preſerve ourſelves in a ſerious temper of mind, and avoid every thing that may make us forget that we have ſouls capable of the extremeſt miſery, if not taken care of;—that we are ſure to be moſt happy when we die, if we are careful to pleaſe God while we live;—and,

Laſtly; That whenever we ſuffer ourſelves to grow unthoughtful, indifferent, and careleſs, we are in greater danger than we are aware of, of hardening ourſelves againſt all motives and means of ſalvation, the fear of hell, and the hopes of heaven.

I beſeech you therefore, brethren, let it be ſeen, by the ſeriouſneſs of our lives, that we hope to go to heaven when we die.

Which God grant, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, our moſt bleſſed Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XII.

THE CHARACTER OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT CONSIDERED AND APPLIED, (FOR OUR DIRECTION AND COMFORT) AS WE ARE THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

MATTHEW XXV. 20, 21.

HE THAT HAD RECEIVED FIVE TALENTS, CAME AND BROUGHT OTHER FIVE TALENTS, SAYING, LORD THOU DELIVEREDST UNTO ME FIVE TALENTS: BEHOLD, I HAVE GAINED BESIDES THEM FIVE TALENTS MORE. HIS LORD SAID UNTO HIM, WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT; THOU HAST BEEN FAITHFUL OVER A FEW THINGS, I WILL MAKE THEE RULER OVER MANY THINGS: ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD,

THE more thoughtful people are, the more apt are they to be caſt down with the remembrance of their imperfections and failings; while they that are leſs careful of their ways are apt to run into another extreme, and hope well for themſelves, not always with good reaſon.

Now all this proceeds from people's having wrong apprehenſions of God. And there is no way ſo likely to free our minds from *falſe hopes* on the one hand, and on the other from *unreaſonable fears*, as this: to conſider well the

the way of ſpeaking which our bleſſed Saviour has made uſe of in the goſpel, to convey to us juſt and worthy notions of God, and the relation we bear to him.

For inſtance:—Sometimes he calls God our *Father*, to aſſure and ſhew us, with what goodneſs and compaſſion he will treat us, if we behave ourſelves like dutiful children. Sometimes he is called a *Judge*, to imprint upon our minds, what an impartial ſentence we muſt expect from his juſtice. Sometimes he is called a *King*, to ſhew us the authority he has over us; and that, as a mighty prince, he has power to puniſh his rebellious ſubjects, who will not return to their duty and obedience. And to mention no more, God is here repreſented as our *Lord* and *Maſter*, to put us in mind of the work we have to do, the account we are to give, and the reward we may expect if we continue his faithful ſervants unto our lives end.

Now, as the Spirit of God has thought fit to make uſe of ſuch expreſſions as theſe, ſo well underſtood by all ſorts of people, we may certainly conclude, that he will deal with us accordingly;—namely, as a wiſe and good *father* would deal with his children, with great tenderneſs and affection, while they do their beſt to pleaſe him;—as a prudent *prince* would govern his ſubjects, with mildneſs, or ſeverity, as they are good or otherwiſe;—and laſtly, as a juſt and bountiful *maſter*, not requiring

quiring of his ſervants more than they are able to perform, bearing with their miſtakes where they are not wilful, and making good all his promiſes, when they ſhall have done their work.

And it is for want of having theſe characters of God before their eyes, that people very often entertain wild or unjuſt thoughts of him and his ways; make their lives uncomfortable, and their religion a burden, by entertaining themſelves with *unreaſonable fears*, while they ſhould be endeavouring to do their duty in that ſtate of life unto which the providence of God has called them; which will be found to be the beſt aſſurance any man can have, that he is a ſervant of God, that he is in the way of ſalvation, and that if he continues in this way he ſhall be approved of God, and admitted into heaven at the laſt.

Now; the relation betwixt *maſters* and *ſervants* being eaſy to be underſtood; and God being pleaſed to expreſs, by ſuch a relation, his purpoſe of dealing with us hereafter; I chooſe theſe words, in order to explain and ſettle in our hearts a true notion of faithfulneſs or ſincerity, that we may have the comfort of knowing when we are ſafe, and that we may not be ſecure and eaſy when we really are not ſo.

And firſt, the words imply thus much; that *as ſervants to the great Lord of the world, we muſt all give an account of the talents which he has*

has given us. This conſideration will be apt to make us ſerious, and concerned for the iſſue of ſuch an account.

Then what follows is expreſsly contained in the text; namely,

1ſt. The approbation of God: *Well done, thou good and faithful ſervant.*

2dly. The reaſon of ſuch approbation: *Thou haſt been faithful.*

3dly. The reward of being ſo: *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

From which neceſſarily follows this truth; that every man who is faithful to huſband the talents which God has given him, or, in other words, who ſhall do his duty in that ſtate of life unto which it has pleaſed God to call him, ſhall certainly be ſaved.

But then this queſtion very naturally comes into our minds: how ſhall I know that I am one of thoſe faithful ſervants to whom ſuch rewards will be given? How may I hope that God will accept of my ſervice; eſpecially when my own heart tells me, that I have done, and am ſubject to do, many things amiſs? Why, pray, how does a well-meaning ſervant know when he may expect his maſter's pardon, approbation, and favour? Does he not conſider what are the characters of a good and faithful ſervant? And if he is conſcious to himſelf that he acts like ſuch a one, is he not eaſy and ſatisfied? And does he not, with ſome aſſurance, depend upon what

what has been promiſed him as a reward of his labours?

To come then to the main deſign of this diſcourſe. Let us conſider what are the characters of a faithful ſervant with reſpect to men; and then let us ſee how we may apply theſe characters, as we are the ſervants of God, for our direction and comfort.

Now if a man enters into ſervice, with a full purpoſe of obſerving all his maſter's juſt commands; if he truly performs what he promiſes, and what he is put in truſt with, and honeſtly employs his time and abilities for the honour and advantage of his maſter; if he patiently ſubmits to be reproved; or, upon calling himſelf to an account, mends where he has done amiſs; we count ſuch a perſon *a good ſervant*; and ſhould be ready to conclude that maſter unreaſonable, who would not be pleaſed with and reward his ſervice.

On the contrary, a wiſe and good maſter will make great allowances for failings which are unavoidable; he knows that the moſt faithful ſervant may miſtake, may be often at a loſs what to do for the beſt, may not always be able to do what he ought to do.

In all theſe, and many more inſtances of failings, which do not proceed from careleſſneſs, from contempt of authority, or from a wilful contracted lazineſs; but rather from weakneſs, ſurprize, or other infirmity, to which all men are more or leſs ſubject; in all

all ſuch caſes, a good man treats his ſervant with compaſſion and forgiveneſs.

And will not THE LORD OF ALL THE EARTH be as *juſt*, as *kind*, and *merciful*, as any of his creatures? And may we not be as eaſy and as ſecure from fear of an angry reſentment in *his*, as in the moſt indulgent ſervice? Yes ſure, provided we do indeed deſerve the character of *good and faithful ſervants*, having his pleaſure and honour moſt at heart; and deſiring to approve ourſelves to him in every thing we do. It is not conſiſtent with infinite mercy, that ſuch ſhould finally miſcarry; and we may very ſafely conclude, that whatever is truly reaſonable, or juſt, or kind, amongſt men, all this will be found, and much more than can be expreſſed, in God's dealings with us.

But to be more particular, and to apply this to the ſervice we owe to our GREAT LORD AND MASTER. Whoever would approve himſelf to be his faithful ſervant, and have a title to the reward of being ſo, muſt lay himſelf under theſe following obligations, which will be a ſure teſt of his faithfulneſs or ſincerity, and conſequently a ſure foundation of peace.

1*ſt*; He muſt reſolve to obey God in all things, to the beſt of his underſtanding and power.

2*dly*. He muſt employ his gifts and graces for the honour of his Lord and Maſter, in the

the diſcharge of ſuch duties as his ſtate of life obliges him to.

3*dly*. He muſt call himſelf often to an account, whether he does ſo or not, and make uſe of the means of grace in order to know and to do his duty.

To keep to theſe rules will ſecure a man in the favour of God; and to fail notoriouſly in any one of theſe will occaſion endleſs ſcruples in a mind fearful of what may come hereafter, and greatly hazard one's ſalvation; as will appear, now we come to conſider the importance and the conſequences of obſerving or neglecting them.

I. And firſt; *a reſolution of obeying God, to the beſt of our underſtanding and power*, is both reaſonable and neceſſary. It is *reaſonable*, on account of God's authority over us; of the aſſurance we have, that all his commands are juſt, and for our good; and becauſe of the reward we may hope for from ſuch an obedience. It is *neceſſary*, both to lay a bias upon the will, to enlighten the underſtanding, and to keep the mind in perfect peace.

It will *lay a bias upon the will*, which is of greater conſequence than is uſually imagined; for certainly it is a great matter to be determined beforehand, that no conſideration whatever ſhall prevail with me to do diſſervice to or to diſpleaſe God, if I know it. For then I have no other diſpute with myſelf, when I come to act, but this:—Is this the will of God?

God? Is this an action worthy of one who pretends to be his devoted ſervant? Is this conſiſtent with the vows that are upon me, and with my hopes of heaven?

And this has been the way of good men, and their ſecurity; *I have ſworn, and am purpoſed, to keep thy righteous judgments*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt; that is, I am determined at all times what to do; *to do the will of my Lord and Maſter, when I know it*, without conſulting my own will, my paſſions, or worldly intereſt.

But for a man, when a temptation lies in his way, to be at liberty to wiſh that God had not forbidden him the thing he deſires;—to queſtion whether the penalty of breaking his laws will be greater than the pleaſure of following his own inclinations;—to be at liberty to hope that the *goodneſs* of God may perhaps pardon, where his *juſtice* has ſo ſeverely threatened: this would be a fatal liberty. It would be parleying with our corrupt appetites, which are often too ſtrong even for our moſt ſettled reſolutions; much more when we are undetermined what to do until we are forced to act; when the preſent pleaſure, or profit, or paſſion, will too likely prevail with us to forget the rewards or puniſhments of a future life.

Such a reſolution is neceſſary, on account of the peace of mind, and ſecurity from fear of evil, it gives us.

Sincerity

Sincerity conſiſts in an inclination and readineſs of mind to learn and to do the will of God. Wherever this is found, there may be miſtakes, there may be failings, there may be ſins of infirmity; but there cannot poſſibly be ſuch a perverſeneſs of the will, or a corruption of manners, as will exclude us the ſervice of God, or forbid us hoping for his pardon, favour, and bleſſing, provided we chooſe not ways of ſerving him of our own deviſing, but make uſe of, and value, the means of grace which his wiſdom and goodneſs has appointed for our inſtruction, aſſiſtance, and ſalvation.

Laſtly; ſuch a reſolution and readineſs to do the will of God, will be a powerful means of underſtanding at all times what the will of our Lord is. *He that will do the will of God*, (ſaith our Saviour) that is, he who deſires to do it, *he ſhall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf.*

The truth appears to men juſt as they are diſpoſed to receive it; and it is not always for want of reaſon, that men do not believe or know the truth, but generally from an unwillingneſs to receive and to obey it. *Hearing ye ſhall hear, and not underſtand*, ſaith our Saviour. And yet this was their condemnation, which could not have been, unleſs the will of God had been plainly made known to them. And it was their crime as well as their puniſhment, that pride, ſelf-conceit,

God? Is this an action worthy of one who pretends to be his devoted ſervant? Is this conſiſtent with the vows that are upon me, and with my hopes of heaven?

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worldly-mindedneſs, being *lovers of pleaſure more than lovers of God*, unfitted them for underſtanding the truth, made the Son of God become a *ſtumbling-block*, and an offence to them to whom he came with terms of ſalvation.

In one word; Jeſus Chriſt has made the way of life plain, not by requiring us to know a great deal, but by obliging us to an honeſt uſe of what we know; by giving us few rules, which he expects we ſhould remember and obſerve; by ſetting us an example, which he demands we ſhould imitate; and by affording us means of grace, which he requires us to make uſe of as we hope for happineſs. And we may judge of our ſincerity, and conſequently of our ſtate with God, by comparing our love for him and his ſervice with any other paſſion.

A covetous man, for inſtance, hears propoſals of gain from ſtrangers, from inferiors, and even from enemies. There needs no apology be made to excuſe the liberty of ſpeaking to him upon that ſubject; one need not bid him have a care of his intereſt; he will be ſure to do that if he knows it. He is very watchful of thoſe that would wrong him; and will not knowingly do any thing which ſhall affect and hurt his great deſign of enriching himſelf. In ſhort, he does all this as naturally as he lives, becauſe his heart is ſet upon this one thing, the increaſing his ſubſtance.

From

From which we may ſet down theſe ſure marks of our ſincerity towards God:—

1*ſt*. That we never conſent to known iniquity.

2*dly*. That we are never uneaſy to hear the truth and know our duty. And,

Laſtly; That we make uſe of thoſe means of knowing and doing our duty which God has directed us to.

Thus will our love to God be ſincere and manifeſt. We ſhall love to pleaſe him; we ſhall eaſily underſtood what *will* pleaſe him; and we ſhall be at peace with ourſelves, and ſecure from fear of anger from ſo good a maſter.

II. But then, *we muſt be ſure to employ all our gifts and graces, all the talents he beſtows upon us, for his honour, in diſcharging the proper duties of our callings.* For this is another character of a good and faithful ſervant:—*Thou haſt been faithful*; that is, thou haſt employed the talents I gave thee, in the buſineſs I appointed thee. That man, therefore, cannot be called a *good ſervant*, who will chooſe what buſineſs he himſelf pleaſeth, to employ his time, and thoughts, and labour upon, and not what his Lord has aſſigned him, and qualified him for.

And yet infinite are the diſorders and inſtances of this nature, and fatal the conſequences, while people neglect their proper buſineſs for what they think a better way of ſpending their time.

Can a man, qualified for and dedicated to the more immediate ſervice of God, innocently engage himſelf in worldly buſineſs inconſiſtent with ſuch an employment? The ſame Lord who has ordained *that they who preach the goſpel ſhould live of the goſpel*, has at once appointed the duty and the ſupport of thoſe that ſerve at the altar.

But more criminal is the indiſcreet zeal of thoſe who go into the ſervice before they are ſent, and will be teachers of others, before their Lord has declared them qualified for ſuch an office. Will he approve of ſuch a ſervant? Will he accept, will he reward his ſervice?

If we conſider how few are appointed to govern, in compariſon of thoſe whoſe duty it is to obey, one would wonder to find ſo many of all conditions as much engaged in modelling the world, and cenſuring the conduct of thoſe who are bound to govern, as if all were to command, and none to obey. And yet, our Lord is *a God of order*, and would have all his ſervants to keep their ſtation, and to obſerve the duties of their calling; ſome of which are indeed common to all Chriſtians:—To promote the glory of God; to be examples of piety; to diſcountenance vice; to comfort the afflicted; and to miniſter to the neceſſities of the poor and miſerable.

In all which duties there is a very great latitude left, that people may have an opportunity

tunity of manifeſting their zeal and piety towards God, and their compaſſion and charity towards men.

But the duties of *our* calling are limited to particular perſons, as the providence of God has ordered it. And every man will have enough to do to ſee his own duties handſomely diſcharged, without engaging in thoſe in which he has nothing to do.

If parents and maſters govern their children and ſervants well; if theſe are dutiful and faithful to them; if magiſtrates act as if they had a maſter in heaven: and they that ought to obey do it for conſcience ſake; if men are juſt in their dealings one with another, and cheerfully aim at the public good; there is no better way of promoting the glory of God, and ſecuring our title to heaven.

It is by theſe things we approve ourſelves Chriſtians indeed; manifeſt our faith by our works; and are more ſure that we are under the conduct of the Spirit of God, by a faithful diſcharge of theſe relative duties, than by any other inſtance or pretence whatever.

Even faſting, and prayer, and alms, or any other acts or expreſſions of devotion, are nothing in the account of God, if we do not hereby become better men, better neighbours, better Chriſtians, in that ſtate of life unto which it has pleaſed God to call us.

III. The laſt character of a faithful ſervant is, *that he often calls himſelf to an account; amends*

amends where he has done amiſs; and uſes proper means for avoiding miſtakes for the time to come.

This is found neceſſary in the common concerns of life; much more is it ſo with reſpect to our duty to God, and the *concerns of eternity*; leſt we fall into ſuch ignorance or inconſideration, as will lead us into ſin without thinking of it. For then, our ſins are as much wilful, as if we ſhould ſay in our hearts, this we will do though we know God has forbidden us.

It is a dangerous error we are apt to run into—We are in *a good way*; we find ourſelves hearty in it; we reſolve to purſue it as long as we live; and we apprehend no danger, or that we ſhall ever miſcarry, having given ourſelves to God's ſervice. But then we do not remember, that all the intimations of ſcripture, which ſpeak of the danger of drawing back, of falling away, are all to no purpoſe, if, as long as we are in this world, we were not liable to be undone; if we continue not *faithful unto death*, careful of our ways even unto our lives' end; which it is not poſſible to do, without calling ourſelves often to an account, and charging ourſelves with the errors we have committed, in order to avoid them for the future.

By this means, if we have done any action which either was in itſelf, or in the manner of doing it, unfit to be done by a ſervant of God, or we did it to an end unworthy of a Chriſtian,

Chriſtian, and we reſolve to forbear that for the time to come, to avoid all occaſions of temptation, and uſe ſuch means as are proper to prevent a relapſe; by doing this, we know what we have to anſwer for, we keep peace with God, and keep all quiet within.

On the other hand, very dreadful have been the conſequences of neglecting this duty.—People have forgot themſelves, their vows, their duty, and their God; have fallen in love with ſins which once they abhorred; and have increaſed their accounts to ſuch a length, that nothing but the ſight of death could force them look upon them. The conſequence of which has too often been—confuſion and deſpair.

But why ſhould we ever ſuffer matters to come to this extremity? Why ſhould we neglect or be afraid to ſee how our accounts ſtand betwixt us and our Lord?

Bleſſed be God, that we ſerve a maſter who knows our infirmities, who will accept of our repentance, and forgive all that is paſt, if we ſincerely purpoſe to ſerve him more faithfully. A maſter, who will command nothing but what is reaſonable and for our good; who cannot miſtake our honeſt intentions, and will accept of our ſincere endeavours inſtead of a perfect obedience; and who will reward us, *not according to our works*, but *according to his mercy and promiſe in Jeſus Chriſt*. Here is no room for complaint, no room for fear, much leſs for deſpair. Let

Let ſuch as are moſt apt to deſpond view a ſervant, who is always prepared to do his Lord's will, is always pleaſed to know it, is angry with himſelf whenever it has been his misfortune to have done amiſs, and takes more care for the time to come not to run into miſtakes. On the other hand, let him look upon the Lord of that ſervant, as very deſirous of the welfare of his whole family; reaſonable in all his commands, concerned to have his houſhold carefully inſtructed in their duty, eaſy to be entreated when matters have gone wrong, ſatisfied with the good meaning and honeſt endeavours of ſuch as could not come up to the utmoſt of their duty; laſtly, juſt to all his promiſes, and kind to his faithful ſervants beyond their expectations. No man, who conſiders that this is really the character, theſe the properties, of the Lord of the world, can deſpair of approving himſelf to God, unleſs this be his caſe,—*that he cannot reſolve to become the faithful ſervant juſt now deſcribed.*

But whether we are *faithful* or otherwiſe, accountable we *muſt* be, whether we will or no. We have all received talents, even thoſe that think they have been moſt overlooked; and we muſt all one day anſwer for the uſe we have made of them.

It is true, our Lord and Maſter is kind and good; but then he is juſt as well as merciful; and if his gifts are neglected, his promiſes deſpiſed,

deſpiſed, his commands broken without regret, and his goodneſs abuſed, he can be ſevere, he has been ſo in inſtances innumerable, and he has declared that he will be ſo, and give to every man according to his works, whether they have done good or evil.

God Almighty make us all truly ſenſible of this, that we may *fear* where we have reaſon ſo to do, and be cheerful where we have none; that we may have always in our eye the prize of our high calling, which will be ſufficient to encourage us under difficulties, excite our beſt endeavours, and reward all our labours.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all honour and glory, now and for ever.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

TRUE REPENTANCE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

Awaken, O God, the ſpirit of Repentance in this drowſy, thoughtleſs world, which ſtands ſo much in need of it;—make me a faithful, ſucceſsful preacher of true repentance;—pour down thy Holy Spirit upon my heart, and upon the hearts of all that ſhall hear theſe truths, that we may all repent and turn to God with all our hearts, and bring forth fruits anſwerable to amendment of life, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake. Amen.

MATTHEW iii. 8, 9, 10.

BRING FORTH FRUITS MEET FOR REPENTANCE; (THAT IS, ANSWERABLE TO AMENDMENT OF LIFE) AND THINK NOT TO SAY WITHIN YOURSELVES, WE HAVE ABRAHAM TO OUR FATHER: FOR I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT GOD IS ABLE OF THESE STONES TO RAISE UP CHILDREN UNTO ABRAHAM. NOW THE AXE IS LAID UNTO THE ROOT OF THE TREES: THEREFORE EVERY TREE WHICH BRINGETH NOT FORTH GOOD FRUIT, IS HEWN DOWN, AND CAST INTO THE FIRE.[a]

THESE words diſcover to us a truth which moſt Chriſtians are not aware of, and which they will be ſurprized at when they hear it; and it is this:—*That too many are ruined, not ſo much by their ſins, as by their*

[a] See Deut. viii. 19, 20. Prov. xxviii. 13. Iſa. i. 16; lv. 6, 7. Jer. iii. 12, 13. Ezek. xviii. 27. Mark vi. 12. 2 Cor. vii. 10.

very

very repentance; that is, they miſtake and take that for repentance, which will never do them any ſervice, and which God will never accept of for the pardon of their ſins.

Sinners we are, every ſoul of us, and every ſoul of us would come ſhort of heaven, if God in mercy had not provided and offered us a remedy for our ſins. This remedy is a *true repentance*. Every Chriſtian who lays hold of it will moſt certainly be pardoned, and ſaved, and be happy for ever. Every one who deſpiſes, neglects, or wilfully miſtakes this remedy, will as ſurely be ſhut out of heaven, and be puniſhed eternally, as God and this word[b] of his, are true.

If this will not make you very attentive to what I am going to ſay upon this ſubject of repentance, I have no other arguments to prevail with you. For this is the very argument or motive, which the Spirit of God in the text made uſe of to awaken the Jewiſh nation, and to prepare them for receiving the mercies of the goſpel juſt going to be offered them. *The axe*, (ſaith the Holy Baptiſt) *the axe is laid to the root of the trees: every tree therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and caſt into the fire:* Aſſuring us by this, that the fruit of *repentance* is that which God expects from us, and which of his great mercy, for Chriſt's ſake, he will accept of; but if this fruit does not appear in our lives, we muſt expect nothing leſs than to be cut off

[b] The Bible.

off by death, and to be burnt with fire unquenchable: there being no other choice for Chriſtian people, but *a true repentance* or *ruin*.

Every Chriſtian, therefore, who lays any thing to heart, will be glad to be informed from the word of God,

Firſt, *Concerning the reaſon and the neceſſity of repentance, and in what true repentance does conſiſt.*

2dly, *What are thoſe miſtakes concerning repentance, which Chriſtians are liable to fall into.*

Laſtly, *How a Chriſtian may have the ſure comfort of knowing whether his repentance will be accepted of God for his pardon and ſalvation.*

And theſe are the particulars, that, by the good grace of God, (which I beſeech him to vouchſafe me) I purpoſe at this time to lay before you, and to charge upon myſelf.

I. I muſt, firſt of all, explain to you THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE. Not only John the Baptiſt, but our Lord himſelf and his apoſtles, began their miniſtry, by exhorting and requiring people to repent, as they hope to be ſaved; plainly ſhewing, that no man can receive the goſpel—can be a Chriſtian,—without forſaking his ſins, which are againſt natural reaſon and conſcience: for he that will not forſake a ſin which his own conſcience tells him he ought not to live in, will not receive a revelation which his own reaſon may tell him comes from God.

This,

This, you ſee, ſhews the abſolute neceſſity of repentance, in order to a man's being a Chriſtian, in order to his receiving the goſpel to any ſaving purpoſes.

We are all of us the ſinful race of Adam; we have, every one of us, the root, the ſpring, the ſeed, the fountain of every evil, within us; and the beſt of us would be as wicked as the worſt we know, if we were left entirely to ourſelves. And as it is, the very beſt of us have done many, many things which are hateful to God; and therefore an holy God could never have taken pleaſure in ſuch ſinful creatures, had not Jeſus Chriſt put us into a way of regaining his favour, if we will but cloſe with the means of ſalvation offered us in the goſpel: that is, if men *will repent and turn to God*; if they will forſake their ſins, which are hateful to God, *and bring forth fruits anſwerable to amendment of life*,—if they do this, they ſhall be pardoned every ſin that is paſt, and be made happy when they die.

Now, it is for this very end, that God has given, and continues to us our lives;—that laying hold of *this mercy*, we may repent, our corrupt nature may be mended, and that we may be reſtored to the image of God, and be fit for paradiſe.

This, I ſay, is God's great deſign in ſetting us in this ſtate of trial, *to qualify us for eternal happineſs*, and at the ſame time to manifeſt his own moſt glorious perfections: that we may

may adore his almighty power, which can enable ſuch poor weak creatures to overcome the greateſt difficulties, the temptations of the fleſh, the world, and the devil;—that we may adore—his wonderful patience, in bearing with our perverſeneſs; his infinite mercy and goodneſs, in pardoning us upon our true repentance; and his ſevere juſtice, in puniſhing thoſe who will not be prevailed upon, by ſo much goodneſs, to repent, and lead a new life.

By this time you ſee the abſolute neceſſity of repentance to ſalvation, and that *true repentance conſiſts in ſuch a ſorrow for having offended God, as is followed by a change of mind, and amendment of life.*

And whether this ſorrow proceeded at the firſt from fear, or from a concern for having abuſed the goodneſs of ſo gracious a God; yet if it bring forth fruit anſwerable to amendment of life, it will be accepted; that is, if the ſinner, being made ſenſible of the mercy of God for Chriſt's ſake to all true penitents, ſhall reſolve with holy Job, *Where I have done iniquity, I will do ſo no more.* If he reſolves with the people of Iſrael, *All that the Lord ſhall command me, that will I do.* If theſe reſolutions are followed by an hatred of every thing that a man believes may diſpleaſe God; —by avoiding as much as poſſible all temptations to ſin;—by a ſincere endeavour to lead an holy and a Chriſtian life;—and laſtly, by uſing the means which God has ordained to keep

keep us from backſliding;—ſuch a perſon is a true penitent, and in the ſure way to heaven and happineſs.

But then, I muſt not conceal it from you, that all this is not ſo ſoon done as adviſed or reſolved upon; the world, the fleſh, and the devil, are not ſo eaſily overcome as renounced. Habits of virtue and goodneſs are not acquired at once; and the way to eternal happineſs, our Lord aſſures us, is narrow and difficult, and will require pains and ſtriving to paſs through it ſafely.

What then muſt be done? Muſt we ſit ſtill, and be content to periſh? That is a frightful thought indeed; and God, to make it ſtill more terrible, has made known to us a truth, that if attended to will awaken the moſt drowſy ſinner alive;—*they that have done evil*, (lived wicked lives) *and do not repent, ſhall go into everlaſting fire.*

Few people can hear this without ſome thoughts and purpoſes of repentance; but then, to avoid the difficulties of a true repentance, the corrupt heart of man has ever been ſeeking for expedients to make it more eaſy and conſiſtent with an unconverted life.

Thus the Jews flattered themſelves that God, for the ſake of Abraham their father, would paſs by their faults more eaſily than thoſe of other people; but the holy Baptiſt, in the text, aſſures them to the contrary. And indeed, from the beginning, they were told

told this in very plain words, and that their being the children of Abraham would not ſecure them againſt the diſpleaſure of God. *If ye at all forget the Lord your God, ye ſhall ſurely periſh, as the nations periſhed which the Lord deſtroyed before your face.*[c] —Notwithſtanding this, Chriſtians have multiplied theſe miſtakes to the ruin of infinite ſouls.

II. Many are apt to think, that repentance is only neceſſary when people have fallen into great and crying ſins; and that when they have forſaken ſuch ſins, though for the fear of temporal puniſhment only, they are in the way of ſalvation. Many imagine, that their repentance is over, when they have expreſſed their ſorrow for having done amiſs, and begged God's pardon. Too many are perſuaded that repentance is in their own power, and that they can ſet about it and perform it when they pleaſe. And too, too many put off their repentance to the very end of their lives.

Theſe are ſad miſtakes among Chriſtians; who will often find to their aſtoniſhment thoſe ſins charged upon them, which they hoped they had repented of, and were forgiven.

Now, to prevent theſe miſtakes, the Spirit of God has joined repentance and converſion together. *Repent, and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out.*[d] So that no degree of ſorrow, no penance, no mortification, no confeſſion, no abſolution, which is not attended

[c] Deut. viii. 20. [d] Acts iii. 19.

with amendment of life, will avail any thing in the ſight of God.

Not only notorious ſinners, but all men living, have need of repentance to reſtore them to the favour of God;—and to think that repentance is in our own power without the grace of God, is as abſurd as it would be to think to raiſe the dead by our own power; the one being as great a miracle as the other.

Let it be obſerved, moreover, that a ſhort ſorrow, and aſking pardon of God, is ſo far from being repentance, that *a Chriſtian's whole life ought to be a ſtate of repentance*; that is, he ought, and he will if he be a true penitent, all his life long lament and ſtrive againſt the corruption of his nature, and be ſorry for the ſins he has ever fallen into, whenever he remembers them. He will evermore watch over his own heart; oppoſe every evil inclination; and immediately beg forgiveneſs of God, whenever any ſin has got the maſtery of him againſt his ſettled purpoſes.

In ſhort, a Chriſtian, for theſe reaſons, will never think himſelf excuſed, to his dying day, from ſelf-denial, from watching and prayer; Jeſus Chriſt having made theſe the ſtanding means of repentance unto life.

But the great miſtake and deluſion of all is, *the depending upon a late, a death-bed repentance.*

Chriſtians ſhould conſider, that the Spirit of God, by requiring us *to bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, has ſhewed us the abſurdity,

dity, the danger, the inexpreſſible danger, of putting off our repentance *till the night come when no man can work.*

And indeed, every body muſt ſee that there would be no neceſſity of a good life, if a man may be unjuſt, or unmerciful, or covetous, or a drunkard, or an adulterer, a profaner of God, his name, or his ordinances, and yet may hope for mercy when he comes to die, upon his being ſorry for his wicked life, and begging God's pardon.

Let it be further conſidered, that God has poſitively declared, that he will render to every man according to his works. Now if a man has done no good works (after his repentance) to balance his evil deeds, what can he hope for but judgment without mercy?

In ſhort; though an evil liver ſhould, when he comes to die, be never ſo ſorry for his ſins. and reſolve ſincerely to change his life, yet ſuch a perſon has no promiſe from God that his repentance ſhall be accepted:—the promiſe, you have heard, is to ſuch as repent and turn to God, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. And accordingly the tree that had not brought forth good fruit, after patience and pains had been ſpent on it in vain, was to be *cut down and burnt.*

I know very well what will be ſaid to this, *that it may drive dying ſinners to deſpair*; but I am not now ſpeaking to dying ſinners; I am ſpeaking to ſuch as have it in their power, by

the grace of God, to repent before they come into that ſad condition, which no man in his right mind would venture his ſoul upon for this whole world.

There were caſes under the law which God reſerved to himſelf, even ſo we muſt leave the fate of a *death-bed repentance* to the uncovenanted mercy of God.

There have been perſons ſo unhappily educated, and ſo extremely ignorant, that when they have come to die, it has appeared they knew nothing almoſt of their duty, or their danger. Such pitiable circumſtances may find mercy with God: but ſuch as live in a continued courſe of ſin, rejecting the means of inſtruction, deſpiſing the means of converſion, hardening themſelves againſt all methods of God for their ſalvation;—ſuch can have little comfort adminiſtered unto them when they come to die. Nor will any miniſter or prieſt of God, who underſtands the goſpel and his duty, dare to give any aſſurance, or other advice, to ſuch unhappy people, than to exhort them to do all that is in their power, and to leave the iſſue to God;—to confeſs, and deteſt, their hatred and contempt of God, and his laws, with the utmoſt abhorrence;—to let all that come to ſee them know what an evil and bitter thing it is when one comes to die, to look back upon an ill-ſpent life;—to warn them, as they love their own ſouls, to repent in time, leſt they alſo come into that ſtate of torment

torment. And laſtly, to accept of ſorrow and anguiſh of mind, as a juſt puniſhment, and ſuch as their caſe requires.

Such humiliations as theſe will have their weight with God; if not to pardon their ſins, yet at leaſt to leſſen their puniſhment, and to keep them from deſpair.

III. We come now to conſider *how a Chriſtian may have the comfort of knowing whether his repentance be ſuch as will be accepted of God for his pardon and ſalvation.*

And, in the firſt place, every man living may have the comfort of knowing aſſuredly, that his ſins, though never ſo great, will be pardoned upon his true repentance. We have the word and oath of the Son of God for this:[e] *Verily, all ſins ſhall be forgiven unto the ſons of men.*

And every Chriſtian may be aſſured, that if God has given him the ſpirit of *repentance*; that is, a fear for himſelf, a ſorrow for having offended God, a deſire of returning to his duty, and of being reconciled to his Maker;—he may be aſſured, that his ſin is not that unpardonable ſin excepted by our Lord, *the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*. He may be aſſured of this, becauſe it is the Holy Ghoſt, who gives him this ſpirit; who gives him grace, and a deſire, and a will to repent; who therefore has not utterly forſaken him; —that is, he has not ſinned the ſin unto death, as the apoſtle calls it.[f]

[e] Mark viii. 28. [f] 1 John v. 16. His

His next concern, therefore, muſt be to look to his *repentance*, that it be ſuch as the goſpel requires; for upon that his ſafety, and the whole comfort of his life and death, depend.

For example:—His conſcience muſt witneſs for him, that he does not live in any known ſin; if he does, he is no true penitent, though he has forſaken never ſo many evil ways. A good Chriſtian may indeed fall into a ſin, through ſurpriſe, through the force of a temptation, for want of keeping a ſtrict watch over himſelf;—but he is no longer a good Chriſtian, or a true penitent, if, being made ſenſible of his fault, he does not immediately repent of it, and reſolve to do ſo no more. Thus did Saint Peter—thus did David—and thus will every Chriſtian do, who conſiders that he ventures no leſs a ſtake than his own ſoul, who ventures to live one moment in any known ſin.

2*dly*. A true penitent,—his conſcience muſt witneſs for him that he does not live in a wilful neglect of any known duty. *Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.* This is the language, this the deſign, both of the law and the goſpel. Let no man, therefore, comfort himſelf with ſaying, that he leads an harmleſs life. Every man has his proper duty and talents, for which he muſt anſwer; ſo that no man can ſay he leads an harmleſs life, who leads an uſeleſs life, or who neglects the duties of his place and ſtate of life.

3*dly*. A

3*dly*. A true penitent,—his conſcience muſt witneſs for him, that he keeps a ſtrict watch over himſelf, for fear of backſliding. *Watch and pray, that ye fall not into temptation.* This is a goſpel rule, never to be diſpenſed with—never to be forgotten;—without which no man can be ſecure of his perſeverance.

Laſtly. A true penitent,—his conſcience muſt witneſs for him, that he ſtrives to pleaſe God in every thing to the beſt of his power. This is the ſureſt proof of a Chriſtian's ſincerity, and of the truth of his repentance, when he can ſay, This I avoid, this I abhor, becauſe I believe it will diſpleaſe God;—when he can truly ſay, This I do, this I undertake, this I ſuffer, becauſe I believe it is the will of God, and will be for his glory. Whoever is in this way is a true penitent, his ſins will be forgiven, and he is in the ſure way of ſalvation;—*theſe being fruits anſwerable to amendment of life*.

But that a Chriſtian may keep in this way, it will be neceſſary that he call himſelf often to an account;—that every night he beg forgiveneſs of thoſe ſins which through frailty he has committed the day paſt;—and that he omit none of thoſe means which God has ordained to keep Chriſtians from backſliding, and from falling into the ſnare of the devil: One of which the church has provided in her daily ſervice,—a ſtanding and an effectual means of obtaining pardon for all ſuch as ſincerely

cerely cloſe with it;—that is, for all ſuch as having with all true humility confeſſed their ſins unto God, do ſecretly beg of him, that the pardon pronounced by his own Miniſter may become effectual for the forgiveneſs of all their ſins.

Only remember, that it is a mere mocking of God to confeſs our ſins, without a ſincere purpoſe of forſaking them; and that the abſolution pronounced by the prieſt of God will only benefit thoſe *who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto God.* And to ſuch—to ſuch as are truly penitent—the daily abſolution will be an invaluable bleſſing and comfort, even as great as it is to be ſatisfied, *that their pardon is ſealed in heaven.*

Another means of grace, and pardon, and ſalvation, is offered us in the ſacrament of the Lord's-ſupper. And a Chriſtian muſt be very ignorant, or very little concerned for his ſalvation, who will turn his back upon that ordinance, which is deſigned to ſeal unto all worthy receivers the pardon of all their ſins.

By this time, I hope you ſee, and are convinced, that *repentance* is not ſo much a *law* impoſed upon you, as a *favour* and a *privilege of the goſpel*;—that it is the greateſt mercy vouchſafed unto ſinners, who, when they have forfeited the favour of God, are not utterly caſt off, but have the promiſe of pardon, and this upon moſt reaſonable terms.

But

But then we muſt be careful not to abuſe this great privilege; that we be not bold to provoke God, becauſe he has been ſo good as to promiſe to pardon us upon our true repentance;—always remembering, that God's great deſign in accepting of our repentance is this, *that we may live to his glory the remainder of our days*;—that we may ſhew, in our converſion, the power of his grace, the riches of his goodneſs and mercy, the faithfulneſs of his promiſes, and the holineſs of his laws.

By this you ſee, *that a Chriſtian's whole life ought to be a ſtate of repentance*;—that we ought, all our days, to be labouring after holineſs and perfection, getting the maſtery over our corruptions, and doing good in our generation. And we ſhall not defer this one moment, if we conſider, that the ſervant in the goſpel, who had moſt improved his talents, had the greateſt reward; and that the ſooner we repent, the more happy we ſhall be when we die.

This ſhews the madneſs of thoſe who will be making experiments, how long they may go on in a careleſs way of living, and ſtill hope that God will be gracious to them, and accept of their repentance. For there is a time *when* (as God himſelf has declared) *he will not be found of them that ſeek him*. Beſides this, every moment we defer our repentance, we leſſen our own happineſs.

But

But above all, let us conſider, that repentance is a work of time, of pains, of ſorrow, and uneaſy to fleſh and blood; that the ways of ſin are extremely hazardous, and a return to our duty very uncertain; that, therefore, they are wiſe and happy, who are taught betimes to fear God, and walk in his ways, who can ſay with the eldeſt ſon in the goſpel, *I never diſobeyed thy commands.* You know the father's anſwer: *Son, all that I have is thine.*

And indeed the goodneſs of God has ſo ordered matters, that this might be the happy caſe of many more Chriſtians, if it were not plainly our own fault.

At our *baptiſm,* he gives us his Holy Spirit to be the principle of a new life to us; an all-powerful Spirit, able to keep us in the ways and in the favour of God to our lives' end.

Were parents careful to inſtruct their children, how to improve and how to preſerve this mighty bleſſing, what an alteration ſhould we ſee in the Chriſtian world! But, alas! they are ſuffered to grow up in ignorance, to get evil habits, to grieve the Holy Spirit by which they were ſanctified, and very often to fall again into the ſnare, and power, and kingdom of Satan. It is then they muſt be plainly told, that they have no other choice but repentance or damnation. And, God knows this is often told to ſuch as turn a deaf ear to ſo dreadful a truth. They are in the power of a Maſter who will not ſuffer them to fea-

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till it be too late to repent, unleſs the Almighty God, by a miracle of mercy, interpoſe his power. And this he does ſometimes by the diſcipline of the church; and would oftener do it, did not wicked men oppoſe this gracious method of his providence for the converſion of ſinners.

But then you ſee the great ſin of thoſe who go about to ſet at nought, to pull down, or to deſpiſe and abuſe, ſuch a powerful means of grace and converſion, which has God for its author, and is ordained to remove ſcandals out of his church,—to awaken and to humble ſinners,—to prevent their being hardened in wickedneſs, and from corrupting others,—to beget in all a fear of falling,—to prevent the judgments of God from falling upon ſociety;—and laſtly, to make ſome reparation to the honour of God for his abuſed authority. Theſe are the ends of *church diſcipline*, and which many a ſinner, I hope, has reaſon to bleſs God for.

To proceed:—By this time, I hope, good Chriſtians, you ſee *that your everlasting welfare depends upon the ſincerity of your repentance*; this being the only way by which a ſinner can poſſibly be reſtored to the favour of God, and put into the way of ſalvation. You ſee that repentance is the gift of God, and that it muſt be begged of him with a ſincere deſign of forſaking every evil way.

To

To encourage us to think, in good earneſt, of ſetting about ſo neceſſary a work, God is ſo good as to offer us all the aſſiſtance that we can poſſibly want: and that we may not flatter ourſelves, that it may not be ſo ill with us as has been intimated, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf has told us what will be the puniſhment of ſin unrepented of: *Eternal darkneſs, pain of body, and anguiſh of mind, unquenchable fire:* AND THESE FOR EVER.

Will any man, in his right mind, who hears, who believes, theſe words of the Son of God, live one moment under the hazard and dread of dying in his ſins? If therefore any of you, who now hear and underſtand me, are convinced that you live in any known ſin, or very frequently fall into the ſame ſins, be perſuaded, as you love your ſouls, from this moment to begin your repentance, to forſake every ſin, *though as dear to you as a right hand or a right eye.* They are the words of Jeſus Chriſt that I am going to repeat: *It is better for you to enter into life, halt, or maimed, or with one eye, than to go whole and ſound to hell, into the fire that never ſhall be quenched*; which words our Lord repeats three times,[g] that Chriſtians may never forget them; that they may repent in time, and never go into *that place of torment.*

You ſee how dangerous a thing it is to fancy ourſelves ſafe, when indeed we are not

[g] Matth. xviii. 8. Mark ix. 43, &c.

ſo.

ſo. Think not, therefore, to ſay to yourſelves, We are Chriſtians;—we are members of a body of which Chriſt is the head, for which he gave his moſt precious blood;—we have the means of grace and ſalvation amongſt us.

Oh, Chriſtians, how many ſouls are there, who, this moment, are bitterly lamenting the ill uſe they made of theſe bleſſings, when they were in this ſtate of trial! Let us who are yet alive think ſeriouſly of this; and reſolve, by the grace of God, to lead a life worthy of the religion we profeſs—of the means and hopes of ſalvation, which God has vouchſafed us—and mindful of the miſery we are liable to in caſe we miſcarry.

It is eaſy and it is common to ſay, *We are all ſinners*; but it is not always conſidered that ſuch ſinners as repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, ſhall be ſaved; and that ſuch as do not ſo ſhall be damned. This ſure makes a mighty difference betwixt ſinners and ſinners.

You ſee what hazard a Chriſtian runs by returning again into the ſins he has repented of. *Sin no more*, (ſaith our Lord[h]) *ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto thee.* And indeed, one may appeal to every man's conſcience, whether he does not find, that the oftener he returns to the ſins he has repented of, the more careleſs and hardened he grows, and more bold to ſin.

[h] John v. 14.

And

And if you are not convinced, by what has been ſaid, of the irreparable danger of truſting to a *death-bed repentance*, do but conſider what you would think of a man who ſhould preach ſuch a doctrine as this:—Chriſtians, notwithſtanding God has expreſsly commanded you to forſake your ſins, and to lead holy lives, as ever you hope for pardon, and to eſcape the damnation of hell;—notwithſtanding God has declared, that this is the utmoſt mercy to be depended on;—yet I will promiſe you pardon and happineſs, if, after an ill-ſpent life, you are very ſorry when you come to die.

This is what Chriſtians would not bear to hear, and yet it is what is every day depended upon without ſcruple.

And now, Chriſtians, if you have attended to what has been ſaid, you will be able better to judge of your ſtate, whether you are really in the way of ſalvation or perdition. If you can truly ſay, that you have forſaken every known ſin, that you reſiſt the corruption of your nature, that you immediately repent of any ſin which through ſurpriſe or frailty you fall into, that you pray for God's grace continually, for light to ſee, and for power to do your duty, keeping out of the way of temptations as much as poſſible; if you can truly ſay that by this way your heart is changed as well as your outward behaviour, and that you ſee the fruits of your repentance in the holi-

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neſs of your life; why then you may with an humble confidence, ſpeak peace unto your ſoul.

Till then, religion will be a burthen to you, you will be a burthen to yourſelves, you cannot love God, you cannot, *as prodigious a ſin as it is*, you cannot but hate him, becauſe you can expect no good from him; you can expect nothing but that his juſtice and judgments will ſometime or other overtake you for your ſins. And this is the reaſon that all who live in their ſins unrepented of, do ſecretly wiſh that there were no God to call them to an account; and, from wiſhing, come at laſt to believe there is no God.

And now, Chriſtians, you ſee plainly, from what has been ſaid, that it is not ſo much any law or decree of God that ſhuts ſinners out of heaven, but the very condition of their nature makes it impoſſible for them to be happy; that therefore our nature muſt be mended before we can hope for any favour from God; we muſt forſake every thing that we believe will diſpleaſe him, and we muſt accuſtom ourſelves to love and to do what he has commanded.

This is that repentance, that duty, which has been ſet before you at this time. And that you may conſider very ſeriouſly of what has been ſaid, I will leave theſe following truths upon your minds. That there is no repentance in the grave; that the night is coming on apace *when no man can work*; that the

the end of ſin is not to be ſeen in this life, that the next life is the life of rewards or puniſhments; that the more we deny, the more we puniſh ourſelves for our ſins, the leſs puniſhment, and the more favour, we may expect from God:—*If we would judge ourſelves*, (ſaith St. Paul[i]) *we ſhould not be judged* (condemned) *of the Lord:*—That by deferring our repentance, we do not only hazard our ſouls, but leſſen our reward if ever we do repent. And laſtly, that if a man when he comes to die, has not this proof of his repentance, that his life has been ſuch as it ſhould be; namely, ſober, chaſte, upright, juſt, merciful; he will want one of the greateſt comforts of a death-bed, one of the ſureſt marks of a repentance unto life.

Awaken, O God, the ſpirit of repentance in this careleſs world, which ſtands ſo much in need of it. Pour down thy Holy Spirit upon the hearts of all that hear theſe truths, that they may repent and turn to God, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake.

To whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghoſt, &c. &c.

[i] 1 Cor. xi. 31.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

CHRISTMAS-DAY.

THE GREAT BLESSING AND THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF A REDEEMER.

The Collect for the Communion-Service, in King Edward's Common-Prayer, early in the Morning.

O God, who makeſt us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thine only Son Jeſus Chriſt; grant, that as we joyfully receive him for our Redeemer, ſo we may with ſure confidence behold him when he ſhall come to be our Judge, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghoſt, one God, world without end. Amen.

LUKE ii. 20.

BEHOLD, I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY, WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE.[a]

THESE are the words, this is the meſſage of God, by his angel, to a company of ſhepherds, the night our Saviour Chriſt was born. The whole account is as follows:— *And there were in the ſame country ſhepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord ſhone round about them; and they were ſore afraid.*

[a] See Iſaiah lii. 7. John iii. 16. Rom. x. 15. 2 Cor. vi. 2. 1 John iv. 9.

And the angel ſaid unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord. And this ſhall be a ſign unto you; ye ſhall find the babe wrapped in ſwaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And ſuddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.

Theſe are the good tidings of great joy, which we are now going to put you in mind of, and to explain to you.

The firſt thing which, at this time, we ſhould conſider, is the wonderful goodneſs of the great God, the Maker of heaven and earth, who in compaſſion to his poor creatures did ſend—not an angel, but—his own Son, to redeem us from the ſad condition our ſins had brought us into. He ſent his Son into the world, *that the world through him might be ſaved.*[b] God grant that every ſoul here preſent may, through faith in his blood, make his coming into the world effectual to every one's own ſalvation; and then it will be matter of joy indeed to all of us, who *now* ſolemnly remember his incarnation and birth.

That we may do it with more ſincere joy and thankfulneſs, we will conſider the evils and dangers which, as fallen and ſinful creatures, we are all ſubject to.

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[b] John iii. 17.

We are ſubject to a corrupt heart; to the malice and power of evil ſpirits; to a proneneſs in our nature to evil continually; to the temptations of an evil world; to a weakneſs of nature, which of itſelf cannot withſtand temptations; to a continual fear of death, and of what may be our condition after death; to the thoughts of a judgment to come, and the dread of the ſentence then to be paſſed upon all men.

Now, the thoughts of theſe evils would make the ſtouteſt heart to tremble, and are enough to diſtract the wiſeſt man alive, if the God of mercy had not propoſed a way to deliver us from this bondage.

This will ſhew us the bleſſing of our Saviour's coming into the world, and the infinite mercies we ſhall receive thereby, if it be not our own fault.

As fallen creatures, we had forfeited all the favours which God deſigned us at our creation. We then loſt that Holy Spirit by which we had power to know and to do our duty, whatever God expected from us. By the loſs of that Holy Spirit, our reaſon became corrupt, and not ſufficient to guide us in the way of truth and ſalvation;—our will and our affections became ungovernable, and we became ſubject to every temptation to ſin; and as ſuch, God, an holy God, could take no pleaſure in us.

This ſhews us the *abſolute neceſſity of a Redeemer*,—of one who could undertake to make ſatisfaction to the Divine Juſtice for the ſins and offences of a whole world;—who was worthy to plead with the great God for his rebellious creatures;—who was able to prevail with God to pardon what was paſt, and to receive them again into favour.

Who does not ſee the neceſſity of ſome one who might let us know upon what terms God would forgive ſinners—who could put us in a ſure way of ſalvation; of one who could obtain for that Holy Spirit, which could help us to ſubdue all our enemies temporal and ſpiritual;—who could ſet us in his own perſon an example, how we ought to walk ſo as to pleaſe God, and to deliver us from the wrath to come?

Now, all this our Redeemer, our Lord Chriſt has done for us. He has given us the greateſt aſſurance, that God his Father will for his ſake be reconciled unto us,—that he will accept of our repentance,—that he will treat us, and deal with us, as he would have done with our firſt parents, had they not ſo grievouſly trangreſſed his command, provided we will be governed by him; that is, *he will make us happy for ever*. That in order to this, he will give us his Holy Spirit, to ſanctify and to amend our corrupt nature. And, what is the moſt aſtoniſhing mercy, he has prevailed with God to make us everlaſtingly happy, if,

during

during this ſhort life of trial, we will but ſtrive to fit ourſelves for that ſtate of happineſs. And, to magnify theſe bleſſings, he has aſſured us, that every ſoul that ſhall be born, from the firſt man that was made to the laſt that ſhall come into the world, may have an intereſt in God's pardon, and in the happineſs he propoſeth, if he does not loſe it by his own fault.

Now to ſet this home upon our hearts, and to teach us to rejoice with reaſon for theſe bleſſings, let us turn our thoughts upon ourſelves, and conſider for whom God has been ſo wonderfully good and kind.

As for ourſelves, we are a race of poor, wretched, ſinful creatures, made ſuch by our own fault; who have no merits of our own to move God to have the leaſt pity for us. On the other hand, if we conſider his divine majeſty, he hath millions and millions of creatures better than the beſt of us, who never offended him, on whom to beſtow his favours.

What then can we think, but that the great God ſhould have overlooked ſo vile a part of his creation, and left them to themſelves? But to ſend his own Son to bring them back to their duty and happineſs! This love, this mercy of God paſſeth our underſtanding, and deſerves all the thanks we can poſſibly render him.

And the truth is, we could never have believed it, had not his Son laid down his life

to

assure us of his Father's compassion for his otherwise lost creatures.

This love of God for lost mankind will still appear more wonderful, when we consider, that he made his Son to be subject to the law and punishment due to sinners, and to all the miseries and afflictions which sinners have brought upon themselves. To *poverty*; for he had not where to lay his head. To *contempt*; for he was made the scorn of men. To *pain*, and *sorrow*, and to *death* after all, in order to deliver us from eternal death.

In order to this, he took our nature upon him, that he might be seen by men, and converse with them, and set us an example how we ought to live so as to please God. He appeared indeed in a poor and humble manner, though he was Lord of the world, and of all things in it. But this was to teach us to put no more value on the good things of this world than what they deserve;—to convince men, that the happiness which he has purchased for us is beyond any thing we can enjoy in this life;—and that he might set us an example of great humility, of submission to the will of God, and to the condition of life in which his providence shall place us: and lastly, to make us sensible what a sin it will be to despise the poor, and such as are in a mean condition, since he himself, by the order of his heavenly Father, was to appear in the world in such a condition of poverty.

It

It is now time to conſider what, in this ſtate of life, Jeſus Chriſt has done for us. He made known to men the only true God, who alone can make us happy. He ſhewed us what ſervice and worſhip was due to him from men. He came to offer from God the forgiveneſs of ſins to all men upon their true repentance. He came to let us know for certain, that ſin unpardoned will be our ruin for ever:—that God would have all men to repent and be ſaved;—that he will make interceſſion with his Father for all ſuch as will leave their ſins, and lead holy lives;—that he will deliver all ſuch from the prevailing power of Satan as go unto God by him, and from the wrath to come. And finally, he will, if it be not our own fault, reſtore us to the image of God, in which our firſt parents were created, and make us partakers of a divine nature in this life, and in the life to come for ever happy.

And now, my Chriſtian brethren, let none of us imagine, that God intended that all this love ſhould be loſt upon us; or that he expects no other fruits of his own infinite goodneſs to us, or of his Son's humility and labours to ſave us, but a bare outward joy and rejoicing.

We do indeed, in our daily prayers, give God thanks in an eſpecial manner *for his ineſtimable love in the redemption of the world, by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*;—a love, indeed, which paſſeth all poſſible expreſſion on our part.

But

But what will this ſignify, if in the manner of our lives we appear to have no knowledge or ſenſe of the bleſſing of a Saviour?

What then doth God expect for all this love? Why; that we ſhould love him, and live like people that do ſo. That we ſhould obey his commands. That we ſhould honour him by our holy lives. That we ſhould convince all that ſee us, that we are Chriſtians in deed and in truth, and that we love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity for the love he has ſhewn us. That we ſhould ſeriouſly reſolve, with thoſe mentioned in the Book of Wiſdom,[c] that we will not ſin, knowing that we are accounted thy children. That we ſhould not debaſe ourſelves, nor diſhonour our Bleſſed Redeemer, by becoming the ſlaves of ſin and Satan, from whom he has redeemed us by his moſt precious blood. But to ſhew our gratitude by fruits worthy of ſo great a mercy; eſpecially in theſe ſad days, wherein the name of Jeſus Chriſt is blaſphemed by unbelievers, occaſioned chiefly by the bad lives of Chriſtians,—but then they are ſuch Chriſtians as are ſure to be ſhut out of heaven, for being worſe than infidels.

In ſhort; all our hopes of pardon, the acceptance of our perſons and our prayers, the grace of God, the conqueſt of our ſpiritual enemies, all our hopes of heaven, do all depend upon the Son of God, whoſe coming into the world we now celebrate with joy.

Let

[c] Chap. xv.

Let us only conſider to whom theſe tidings of joy belong. Why; to every penitent ſinner, to every one who fears God, and is afraid for himſelf, to every one who loves God, and deſires to do what ſhall pleaſe him; in ſhort, to every one who is concerned for his own ſoul, and hopes for ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt. To all ſuch as theſe, the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt will be good tidings of great joy.

On the other hand, all ſuch as live in their ſins unrepented of: ſuch as are unjuſt, covetous, hard-hearted, revengeful, malicious, drunkards, profane, and the like; theſe cannot, ought not, to rejoice: and for a very dreadful reaſon, foraſmuch as this ſame Jeſus, we are aſſured, will come to judge the world in righteouſneſs, and give to every man according to the works done in the body; whether good or evil.

I would not detain you from the ſolemn ſervice of this day; but a few words I would leave upon your memory. For example: When Chriſtians hear ſuch gracious words as theſe, *that God ſent his Son into the world to ſave ſinners*; *that ſuch as receive and believe in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life*; they are too apt to fancy, that they are in no great danger, ſince Jeſus Chriſt has paid our ranſom. Let us have a care of abuſing, inſtead of magnifying the mercy of God.

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt has indeed redeemed us from the wrath to come; but then he muſt redeem us firſt from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a people zealous of good works.

We may be aſſured that the caſe of ſinners and their puniſhment will be unſpeakably dreadful, ſince the only Son of God left the glories of heaven, to lead a poor and humble life on earth, for no other end than to convince ſinners that if they were not reconciled unto God, their loſs would be great, and their miſery beyond expreſſion, without remedy.

You will obſerve, (and it ought to increaſe your joy) that our redemption, and all the ſteps leading to it, is matter of mere grace. When God ſent his Son into the world, there was nothing in us to move him to it, but his own infinite goodneſs, and our infinite miſery.

Whatever pretence Adam and his poſterity might have to the favour of God before the fall, all was forfeited by his tranſgreſſion; and this is the reaſon that *the free grace of God* is ſo much ſpoken of in the goſpel; that men may not claim any thing to themſelves, but to be humble, thankful, and obedient, to the Lord that bought and redeemed them.

To conclude:—The church has ſanctified *this day* and *this ſeaſon*, in honour of our bleſſed Saviour, and of his coming into the world.

Our duty this day is to give God our moſt ſincere thanks, for his infinite mercy and goodneſs in ſending his Son into the world,

to ſhew us our duty and our danger; how to perform the one, and to avoid the other.

Now; as this ought to be the ſubject of our thanks and joy at this time, we ſhould not forget, that it was our ſins which occaſioned our bleſſed Lord's humbling himſelf to be born into the world; that we might not be miſerable for ever.

This will help to temper our joys, leſt, forgetting our danger, we loſe our ſhare in the bleſſings he came to bring us.

Let all ſuch, therefore, as value themſelves for being Chriſtians, and who hope for any benefit from Chriſt's coming into the world, reſolve, in the firſt place, ſincerely to repent of thoſe ſins for which he gave his life and blood; and they will not only have joy in themſelves, but will occaſion joy in heaven.

And may our gracious God fill all our hearts with ſincere thanks, as well as our mouths with praiſe: then we ſhall have good reaſon to rejoice indeed!

Now, unto him who had compaſſion on us when we were under the ſentence of death, and ſent his only Son to deliver us; Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and thankſgiving, and power, be unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XV.

CHRISTMAS.

THE MEANING AND EXTENT OF THE SALVATION PURCHASED BY JESUS CHRIST, AND THE DREADFUL CASE OF THOSE WHO DESPISE IT.

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1 TIM. i. 15.

THIS IS A FAITHFUL SAYING, AND WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION, THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS.

THAT is; there is no truth more certain, no truth more worthy of our knowledge, no truth which ſo much concerns us to know, or which we may more ſurely depend on, than this; *That Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners.*

But however worthy this truth is to be received of all men, yet few, God knows, receive it as they ought to do. For how many are there, who, becauſe Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners, hope for ſalvation, without taking any care to live as becomes the goſpel of Chriſt! How many who believe this truth, and yet receive no comfort from it; either ſuſpecting themſelves not to be of the number of thoſe whom Chriſt came to ſave,

ſved, or that their ſins are too great to be pardoned! And laſtly, how very many are there, who. though they are indeed ſinners, never think of the danger of being ſuch; and are therefore as careleſs and unconcerned for what may come hereafter, as if there were nothing to be feared, nothing to be hoped for!

Now, all theſe being ſad deluſions, and a great diſhononr to Chriſtianity, it well becomes the ſervants of him, who came into the world to ſave ſinners, to uſe their utmoſt endeavours to remove them; to ſupport the ſpirits of thoſe who fear where there is no danger; to awaken the conſciences of thoſe who are ſecure and careleſs in the very midſt of danger: and laſtly, to reprove the preſumption of thoſe who hope for ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt, without obſerving his laws.

And theſe are the things which I beſeech you will give attention to with the greateſt ſerioufneſs. And that I may ſet theſe things before you after as plain a manner as poſſible, we will conſider,

1ſt. The meaning and extent of this truth, *That Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners*; that we may be able to judge who may, and who may not, hope for ſalvation through his merits.

2dly. We ſhall conſider the deluſion, and the danger, of thoſe who neglect or deſpiſe the ſalvation purchaſed for them by Jeſus Chriſt.

I. We

I. We will firſt conſider the MEANING, and then the EXTENT, of this truth, *That Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners.*

Now, a ſinner is one, who, having broken the laws of God, has reaſon to fear that God will ſeverely puniſh him for ſo doing. He ſees very plainly, that he cannot deliver himſelf from the wrath of an angry God. He is ſo far from being able to make any ſatisfaction for the ſins he has been guilty of, that he finds in himſelf a proneneſs, an inclination to evil, and an averſion, an unwillingneſs to cloſe with what God has commanded us for our good. This is the condition of a *ſinner*;—this is the condition of every man by nature. And a ſad condition it will appear to be to every one who knows and conſiders, that the end of ſin is not to be ſeen in this life; but that *a day is coming, in which God will judge the world in righteouſneſs, and give to every man according to the works done in the body.*

What ſinner, what man living, could think of this without deſpair, if Jeſus Chriſt had not undertaken to deliver us from the juſt diſpleaſure of God; to make ſatisfaction for our ſins; to reſtore us to God's favour; and to put us into a way of being happy for ever?

But what has Jeſus Chriſt done to ſave ſinners from this ſad condition? Why; he took upon him the nature of man; he dwelt amongſt men; made known to them this comfortable truth, that God, for his ſake, will accept

accept of our repentance; receive us into favour, notwithſtanding our paſt offences; aſſiſt us with helps ſufficient to do what he expects from us; and will make us eternally happy when we die, if we will ſuffer ourſelves to be governed by his holy laws while we live.

To convince us more effectually of the truth and importance of theſe things, after he had wrought many wonderful miracles to ſhew that he came from God, he willingly laid down his life for *our* ſake, for *our* ſins, for *our* offences; and that God might ſpare us, and not puniſh us as we had deſerved.

And God, to convince mankind how entirely he was reconciled to them on account of his Son's death, raiſed him from the dead, received him into heaven, ſet him at his own right hand, where he is continually interceding for all thoſe that come unto God by him, that pray to God for his ſake.

And that we may have no doubt in our minds but that all this is done in heaven for us, our Lord ſent down the Holy Ghoſt to ſupply his place on earth; who, having appointed an order of men to publiſh theſe glad tidings to the whole world, enabled them to work miracles, to ſpeak languages which before they were ignorant of, to heal the ſick with a word of their mouth, to raiſe the dead; in one word, to do ſuch things as none but ſuch as were ſent by God could do.

And laſtly, theſe having fulfilled their miniſtry, before they laid down their lives for the truths they had preached, they (as Jeſus Chriſt had commanded them) ordained others to ſupply their places, to preach theſe truths, to offer theſe terms of mercy to all ſucceeding generations, with whom he promiſed his preſence and bleſſing unto the world's end.

To theſe he has given power to receive all that are willing into his family, which is his church; to reconcile ſuch as fall, and return from their evil ways; and to repreſent unto God the ſatisfaction which his Son has made in *our* nature for *our* ſins.

This is what Jeſus Chriſt has done for us. He has reconciled us to God; he has put us into a way of ſalvation; he has given us all neceſſary aſſiſtance, to ſupport our weakneſs, to reſiſt our enemies, to renew our nature, and to make us fit for heaven and happineſs.

But have all men a right to this ſalvation purchaſed by Jeſus Chriſt? This we ſhall ſee now we come to conſider the EXTENT of theſe words, *That Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners.*

And truly, the ſcriptures are in nothing more plain than in this truth, *That God ſo loved the world, that he ſent his Son, that the world through him might be ſaved.*[b]

That God had no reſpect of perſons in thus loving the world, *his will being this,* THAT

[b] John iii. 17.

ALL MEN SHOULD BE SAVED:[c]—That even ſuch as periſh, through their own wilful diſobedience, are of the number of thoſe whom Jeſus Chriſt came to ſave. *They denied*, ſaith St. Peter, *the Lord that bought them*; that bought and would have ſaved them, but that they brought upon themſelves deſtruction.

Nay; to take away all manner of ſcruple, and to apply this comfortable truth to the minds of afflicted penitents, St. Paul ſpeaks of this after a moſt convincing manner:[d] *As the ſin of Adam* (ſaith he) *affected all his poſterity; as by one offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; ſo the merits of Chriſt were deſigned to redeem all the poſterity of Adam: foraſmuch as by the righteouſneſs of one*, that is, Jeſus Chriſt, *the free gift came upon all men unto juſtification of life.*

As ſure then as I am one of thoſe, who by Adam's tranſgreſſion am become corrupt and a *ſinner* before God, ſo ſure am I redeemed by Jeſus Chriſt. This every Chriſtian man may ſay to himſelf.

This was the very doctrine of Chriſt himſelf, and this he taught by his own example, when he prayed for the very perſons who crucified him, who had an intereſt in the very death they made him to ſuffer; otherwiſe he would not have prayed that God would forgive them.

And the Church of Chriſt ſtill continues to intercede with God for all mankind, holding

[c] 1 Tim. ii. 4. [d] Rom. v.

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this truth, that the love of God, and the merits of Jeſus Chriſt, extend to the whole race of men. By this practice, endeavouring to bring the hearts of believers to that godlike temper of charity and good-will for all that bear the image of God; and by this practice, ſupporting the ſpirits of dejected penitents, who will have no reaſon to deſpair, ſince the greateſt ſinners are in a capacity of being ſaved.

We are obliged to ſay, *in a capacity of ſalvation*; for the truth is, All are not ſaved that Chriſt came to ſave. Salvation is indeed offered to all, to whom the goſpel is or has been preached; but all are not diſpoſed to receive it, eſpecially on the terms on which it is offered.

Many are not ſenſible of the danger they are in; others will not forſake their ſins for any conſideration whatever; and even too, too many deſpiſe the very offers of a Redeemer, of pardon and grace through him.

In all theſe caſes, the Saviour of the world aſſures us, that it is their own fault, purely their own fault, if they are not ſaved. *Ye will not come unto me*, (ſaith he) *that ye might have life.*[c]

If people, when ſalvation is offered them, will notwithſtanding unworthily ſlight the mercy; if men, to whom God has made himſelf known, will not retain God in their knowledge; if thoſe that have been enlightened,

[c] John v. 40.

and have eſcaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, if they are again entangled therein, and are finally loſt; this is not for want of means to ſave them, but they *will not* be ſaved,—they will not attend to the word preached unto them,—they will not believe the terrors of the world to come,—they will not ſubmit to the terms of ſalvation. This being their caſe, their deſtruction is from themſelves.

II. And this brings us to conſider, *how very dreadful the caſe is of thoſe who deny the Lord that bought them, or neglect the offers of ſalvation made by him to all ſinners.*

And indeed, when we conſider what Jeſus Chriſt has done in order to redeem and ſave us, we ſhall have the greateſt reaſon to believe that the puniſhment of thoſe who are not ſaved by him will be unſpeakably great. For can we imagine that Chriſt, the Son of God, would have left the glories of heaven, and would have lived a miſerable life on earth, and died a more miſerable death, but that he knew, that if ſinners were not reconciled to God, but died in their ſins, their puniſhment would be terrible, and their condition miſerable, and without remedy.

So that the greatneſs of the mercy may convince us of the greatneſs of the puniſhment of thoſe that deſpiſe the ſalvation offered them. The Spirit of God, from whom only we can know

know what becomes of men after death, aſſures us, that ſuch ſhall be ſhut out of heaven, and have their portion in a place where there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth.

And whatever may become of thoſe who have never had the goſpel preached unto them, they who have had ſalvation offered to them, and mind it not, muſt not expect to eſcape a ſevere judgment.

And leſt we ſhould think ourſelves ſafe, becauſe we have embraced the goſpel, let us always remember, that the goſpel requires faith and repentance of all that expect any benefit by it. We muſt not only ſay, we believe the goſpel, but we muſt live like men that do ſo; like men that are in the midſt of enemies, with fear and care, leſt we ſhould miſcarry; like thoſe that have eſcaped eternal miſery, with thankful hearts; and like thoſe who hope to go to heaven, where no impure thing can enter.

But if, inſtead of doing ſo, we lead a careleſs or a wicked life; if we neglect the means of grace, the ordinances of God, and turn our backs upon the word and ſacraments; if we confeſs we are ſinners, and yet take no care to amend our ways; if we are taken up with the buſineſs or pleaſures of this life, ſo as to forget that there is another to come; why then, in truth, we are not of the number of thoſe who ſhall be ſaved; neither will it be

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any bleſſing to ſuch, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners.

And now, good Chriſtians, you ſee what a merciful regard God has had for his poor creatures in this diſpenſation. The moſt ignorant may know what God expects from them. The greateſt ſinner may be ſure of pardon, if he repents, and brings forth fruit anſwerable to amendment of life. The weakeſt Chriſtian may depend upon all neceſſary aſſiſtance. The meaneſt ſervant of Chriſt may be ſure not to be overlooked. Laſtly; every Chriſtian may be confident, that his labour will not be in vain, but that he may be for ever happy, if it be not altogether his own fault.

Theſe are certain truths, and worthy of all men to be received. How comes it then to paſs, that we ſo often hear theſe truths without being affected by them? Why, the truth is, we are not well convinced of the danger a ſinner is in without the help of a Redeemer.

If one talks to a ſick man about the cauſe of his illneſs, and gives him good hopes that his diſtemper is curable, you need not uſe many words to perſuade him to hear you, becauſe his life is at ſtake; but if you tell a man that thinks himſelf well, of a remedy, it is a thouſand to one but he forgets it. This is our caſe—the caſe of the generality of Chriſtians. We, in obedience to our Lord's command, preach faith, and repentance, and obedience;

obedience; we publiſh in his name a free pardon to all who are willing to comply with the terms of ſalvation. They that lay things to heart,—that know they are ſinners, and the danger of being ſuch; theſe gladly *hear*, and *receive*, and *remember*, and *obey*, the terms of ſalvation; whilſt others are as unconcerned as if they had nothing to fear.

From whence you ſee, Chriſtians, that your faith and ſalvation depend very much upon that diſpoſition with which you hear the goſpel. If you are ſerious, and concerned in good earneſt for your ſalvation, it will be no hard matter to perſuade you to look upon the goſpel as the greateſt bleſſing. But without theſe diſpoſitions, the goſpel will be a burthen to you; Jeſus Chriſt himſelf no bleſſing; nor heaven worth caring for.

You ſee who they are, who ought to rejoice upon every return of this feſtival, who ought to take comfort; by whom this truth is worthy to be received; even by all ſuch as are ſincere, ſuch as reſolve to ſerve and to pleaſe God to the beſt of their power. Such may be ſure of pardon and acceptance, though they have been never ſo great ſinners. All ſuch may and will receive the terms of pardon, and him who has obtained them, with open arms, and with a glad heart; admiring the great goodneſs of God; adoring the love of their Redeemer; reſolving to live worthy of ſuch mighty favours. And theſe paſſions will

will make us all *cheerful*, without being foolishly vain; *ſerious*, without being ſad and caſt down; *ſober* as Chriſtians, though our hearts are full of joy.

Now, unto him, who had mercy upon us when we were in darkneſs and under the power of Satan; who took our nature upon him, was born an infant, became ſubject to the law made for ſinners, offered himſelf a ſacrifice for the ſins of the whole world, and raiſed up ſinful men to the honour of being the children of God: to him be all honour, and glory, and bleſſing, and thankſgiving, and power, aſcribed by us and by all his faithful ſervants, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

DISPOSITIONS NECESSARY TO MAKE JESUS CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL THE GREATEST OF ALL BLESSINGS.

MALACHI iv. 2.

UNTO YOU THAT FEAR MY NAME, SHALL THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ARISE WITH HEALING IN HIS WINGS.[a]

I Make choice of theſe words, from amongſt many other texts of Sacred Scripture declaring the ſame thing, to ſhew you—*what diſpoſitions are neceſſary to make Jeſus Chriſt and his Goſpel appear to be, what they really are, the greateſt bleſſings that God ever beſtowed upon mankind.*

It is true, all Chriſtians are ready to own this, and pretend to rejoice and to be thankful for ſo great a bleſſing; when, after all, it is utterly impoſſible, that any man ſhould from his heart be glad, when he does not feel his own miſery; who does not truly apprehend the miſery of mankind without the bleſſing of a Redeemer.

[a] See Iſaiah lxi. Matth. xi. 28. Luke iv. 18; v. 31; and xix. 10. Acts xiii. 26, 48.

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It was for this reaſon, that the Spirit of God, before Jeſus Chriſt took our nature upon him, expreſsly foretold, who they were to whom the Meſſiah ſhould preach; who *would*, and who would *not*, receive him and his doctrine.

For inſtance, in Iſaiah, [chap. lxi. 1] it is ſaid, that God anointed the Meſſiah *to preach good tidings to the meek*, for they only would receive his meſſage; *to bind up the broken-hearted*, for ſuch only would be glad of his help; *to proclaim liberty to the captives*, for they only who were ſenſible of their bondage would be glad to be ſet at liberty. Accordingly; when our bleſſed Saviour came amongſt men, he invited ſuch only to be his hearers, to whom he knew his doctrine would be acceptable: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you.* And when he was blamed for converſing too freely with publicans and ſinners, he ſilenced his adverſaries with this reaſon and anſwer: *They that are whole need not a phyſician, but they that are ſick. I came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance.*

Why; are not all men, without exception, ſinners? Yes. But that which is intimated in theſe words is this: that there are ſinners who are not at all ſenſible of their bad condition; and their condition is the more deplorable for that: while ſuch as are truly ſenſible of their own ailments are very thankful

ful for help, and readily comply with the advice of ſuch as can help them. And therefore, when a certain publican, to teſtify the ſincerity of his repentance, reſolved to part with his eſtate rather than not do every body right that he had before wronged, Jeſus Chriſt aſſures him, that his having been a greater ſinner than ordinary will be no hindrance to his ſalvation: *for the Son of Man* (ſaith he) *is come to ſeek and to ſave that which is loſt*;[b] that is, ſuch as out of a ſenſe of their miſery apply to *him* for health and ſalvation.

In ſhort; wherever the goſpel was preached, whether to Jews or Gentiles, *as many as were ordained to* (that is, diſpoſed for) *eternal life, believed.*[c] As many as *feared* God, and were *in fear* for themſelves, and trembled to hear of a judgment to come, all ſuch *believed*, became Chriſtians in good earneſt, and thought it a great bleſſing that they could be delivered from their fears upon the conditions the goſpel propoſed.

By this time you perceive the meaning of the text, which I have brought all theſe ſcriptures to explain: *Unto you that fear my name, ſhall the Sun of Righteouſneſs ariſe with healing in his wings.* That is; To all that truly fear God, and are ſenſible how much they have provoked him by their ſins; to ſuch, Jeſus Chriſt and his goſpel will both be welcome, and a bleſſing: whilſt *all the proud,*

[b] Luke xix. 10. [c] Acts xiv. 48.

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(as it is in the verſe going before the text) ſuch *as do wickedly*, fearing no evil, *ſhall be burnt as ſtubble*.

So that the plain meaning and deſign of all theſe ſcriptures is, to ſhew how men muſt be diſpoſed to receive Jeſus Chriſt, and his goſpel, to any ſaving purpoſes. For it is but too ſure, that there are an infinite number of people, to whom Jeſus Chriſt, *the Sun of Righteouſneſs*, is preached, who notwithſtanding continue in darkneſs; and though he comes *with healing in his wings*, yet they periſh for want of being diſpoſed to be ſaved. *To you that fear God*, (ſaith the Prophet) *he will ariſe with healing in his wings. Whoſoever among you feareth God*, (ſay the Apoſtles[d]) *to you is the word of this ſalvation ſent*. The fear of God, therefore, is the foundation of ſaving faith.

People may profeſs chriſtianity, and be no gainers by it in the end; they may be called Chriſtians, before they know the duties or the bleſſings of the goſpel; and if they have not the fear of God in their hearts, they may live in an outward, formal profeſſion of the chriſtian religion all their days, and die in a condition not better than that of infidels.

Therefore, it behoves us all, as we value our ſouls, ſeriouſly to conſider, and to know,

Firſt; What that fear of God is, and how it is wrought in us, which is ſo neceſſary a condition and foundation of ſaving faith?

[d] Acts xiii. 26.

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2*dly*. We ſhall ſee that we have juſt cauſe to be afraid, and that the more we know, the more we ſhall abhor ourſelves.

Laſtly. That the more we know and abhor ourſelves, the ſooner will God receive us into favour, and the more cautious we ſhall ever after be of loſing his favour.

And theſe ſhall be the particulars, which, by God's help, I ſhall now explain to you.

I. We will firſt conſider *what this fear of God is*, and how it is wrought in us, *which is the condition and foundation of ſaving faith*.

And firſt, we muſt be careful not to miſtake the *fear of man* for the *fear of God*. Human laws, fear of ſhame, of reproach, and many other worldly conſiderations, may reſtrain a man from crimes that other people are guilty of; and yet, ſuch a man may be an utter ſtranger to the fear of God. Whereas ſuch as truly fear God are not led thereto by any earthly conſideration whatever; but they have ſeriouſly conſidered their own great corruption, and God's infinite purity; their own ſad deſerts, and God's ſevere juſtice; they cannot but acknowledge the juſtice and holineſs of his laws, and yet they find in themſelves an unwillingneſs to obey them. They are ſure that without God's grace they cannot do any thing that is good; and yet they find in themſelves a ſtrange backwardneſs even to aſk that favour and aſſiſtance. They know, that they live upon his bounty, and yet they cannot find

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in their hearts to be thankful. Theſe are both inſtances of great diſorder, and muſt needs make them liable to God's diſpleaſure. They profeſs to believe, *that the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*; and yet they are apt to ſin as preſumptuouſly as if they were indeed hid from his ſight. They hear how ſeverely he threatens thoſe that tranſgreſs his laws. They have ſeen his judgments upon other ſinners, and they know not how ſoon it may be their own caſe.

All theſe are real occaſions of fear; and this fear is greatly increaſed, when they conſider how unable they are to help themſelves.—They cannot flee from his preſence; they dare not ſtand upon their innocency; they ſee that ſorrow and tears, and aſking forgiveneſs, will not prevail with an earthly judge to pardon criminals, when their crimes are only againſt men like themſelves; and why ſhould they ſuppoſe that God will not avenge the preſumptuous breach of his laws, and affronts againſt his divine Majeſty?

And not only their fears are increaſed by theſe conſiderations, but their ſorrows likewiſe, by conſidering the happineſs of heaven, which they were made capable of enjoying: and knowing at the ſame time, how unworthy they have made themſelves of ſuch mighty favours.

Now; people that are under ſuch convictions of guilt, under ſuch fears, under ſuch concern

concern for their everlaſting welfare, (as all people muſt be who lay things to heart) ſuch people will be glad to hear that God will forgive them upon any terms; they will thankfully own his great goodneſs, and reſolve to comply with what *he* is pleaſed to appoint, in order to their reſtoration to favour; they will be afraid of loſing his favour again, by any wilful neglect of their duty;—and, when through frailty they had done amiſs, they will moſt heartily bewail their misfortune and faults:—and by ſuch diſpoſitions as theſe, they become fit objects of God's mercy in Jeſus Chriſt. For it was to people thus affected and thus diſpoſed, that Jeſus Chriſt ſpoke, when he ſaid, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.* And indeed it is purely for want of ſuch diſpoſitions as theſe, that the goſpel is preached without effect; that Jeſus Chriſt, and ſalvation through faith in him, is offered *even to us Gentiles*, who before were in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death; and we ſcarce eſteem it a favour, becauſe we are not ſenſible of the ſad eſtate we are in without *the bleſſing of a Redeemer.*

For as a man, who feels his diſorder, and knows that he is in danger without the help of a phyſician, cannot poſſibly be eaſy till he has done what he can to ſave himſelf from death, and will be truly thankful when help

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is offered him; ſo ſurely ſhould we be, did we but well underſtand the danger we are in.

And if people can be always eaſy, and can paſs their days without fear and concern for what may come hereafter, it is a moſt ſure ſign they neither know themſelves, nor know what is to be hereafter.

This then is the ſpring of all our miſery: We are in danger, and do not know it; we are ſick, and do not perceive it; we are in the way of ruin, and yet fear no evil. And while it is thus with us, no wonder that Jeſus Chriſt and his goſpel are preached, and recommended, and preſſed upon us, without any viſible effect upon our faith or lives.

How neceſſary, then, muſt a diſcourſe be, which *will ſhew us to ourſelves?* It may be uneaſy to fleſh and blood to have our weakneſs and miſeries laid open; but it is a moſt neceſſary work; our health and welfare depend upon it. I ſhall therefore, in the next place, ſhew,

II. *That we are far from being ſafe; that we have indeed cauſe to be afraid; and the more we know, the more we ſhall abhor ourſelves.*

That man was created in the image of God; that is, *in righteouſneſs and true holineſs*;[e] that he loſt that image, by his infidelity and diſobedience; that all men, from that day to this, are extremely corrupt before God, having *their underſtanding darkened*;[f] *their heart*

[e] Epheſ. iv. 24. [f] Eph. iv. 18.

full

full of uncleanneſs;[g] all their members prepared for wickedneſs, whenever a temptation comes in the way;[h]—that being *children of diſobedience*,[i] they are in a great meaſure governed by the ſpirits and powers of darkneſs; out of whoſe power it is impoſſible ever to recover ourſelves, by any thing we can do, without the grace of God.

Theſe are truths which the Spirit of God has made known to us, that we may know what we are, and what we muſt expect, if we die in this condition; and that if the image of God be not renewed in us during our continuance here on earth, we ſhall have our portion, *for ever*, with thoſe ſpirits which kept *not their firſt eſtate*, who are therefore *reſerved in everlaſting chains, unto the judgment of the great day*.

This, God has been pleaſed to make known to us, in order to awaken us, that we may conſider, and ſee, and feel, the diſorders we labour under, and what it will end in, if we are not careful of ourſelves.

But you will ſay, all people are not thus perverſe and wicked, and in this wretched and ſad condition. No: thanks be to God, through Jeſus Chriſt, all men are not actually ſo; but then it is owing to the fear of God, by which they have been converted, by which they have been *taken out of the ſnare of the devil*, who otherwiſe *would have led them cap-*

[g] Mark vii. 21. [h] Rom. iii. 13. [i] Eph. ii. 2.

tive at his will. For, that all men are by nature enemies to God and goodneſs, and would all be equally wicked and miſerable, if not ſome way or other reſtrained, is plain from our very children, whom we are obliged to chaſtiſe and puniſh, even as ſoon as they are able to do any thing, to keep them from doing miſchief, which, if let alone, would end in their deſtruction. The ſeeds of all manner of wickedneſs is in them, and theſe would all appear and grow up, if we did not weed them out, and root them up by a careful diſcipline.

And this, God knows, is but too often, by experience, made manifeſt; where children have been left to themſelves, and the ſeeds of all manner of villainy, which were naturally in them, have been ſuffered to grow to perfection. The very firſt thing that appears in them, is an averſion to every thing that is good. No ſooner can they ſpeak plain, but they are apt to lie. The firſt uſe of their reaſon generally appears in cunning, and tricks that do not beſpeak a ſimplicity which one could wiſh in them. From theſe faults they follow their inclinations to greater, till at laſt they commit all iniquity with greedineſs, and bring upon themſelves deſtruction both of ſoul and body.

And I beſeech you conſider, that this is not the caſe of this or that wicked perſon; for we are all of the ſame make and frame of ſpirit;

ſpirit; we have all the ſame ſeeds of corruption within us; and it is the grace of God, that any one man is better than another.

Whoever looks into the world, or into his own heart, muſt own this; he muſt ſee that nature is ſtrangely corrupt, when people muſt be forced by laws and puniſhments to do what all men own is fit to be done;—when the duties of religion are looked upon as a burthen;—when men can pray with indifference for the pardon of their ſins, for the favour of God, and for an happy life after death;—when we know what we ought to do, and own that it is reaſonable, and yet muſt ſtruggle hard with ourſelves, before we can conſent to do what we inwardly approve of.

All theſe are ſure ſigns of a bad condition; and it is neceſſary that we ſhould know this, and be often put in mind of the danger we are in, that being convinced how miſerable our condition is, we may give no reſt to ourſelves, till, by the grace of God, we have found out a way to eſcape.

And this brings us to the laſt part of our diſcourſe:

III. *That the more ſenſible we are of our own unworthineſs, the more we abhor ourſelves, the ſooner will God receive us into favour, and the more cautious we ſhall ever after be of loſing his favour.* "Surely (ſaith the Pſalmiſt[k]) his "ſalvation is nigh them that fear him."

[k] Pſ. lxxxv. 9.

It has been always obſerved by thoſe that take notice of God's providences, that God, for the moſt part, *then* interpoſes, when things are come to extremity, and when men have no hopes of help from any thing they themſelves can do.

It was juſt thus, when our bleſſed Saviour took our nature upon him, and manifeſted himſelf to the world. The Jews knew by the *law* what ſin was, and what it deſerved. The reſt of the world knew, by what their own conſciences ſuggeſted, that ſin ſtuck cloſe to them; and thoſe that were ſerious feared what might follow. And this perplexity of mind, in which the goſpel found men, made it very acceptable, and more readily to be embraced; and they received with thankfulneſs a diſpenſation ſo full of goodneſs, which aſſured them, of pardon upon their repentance; of grace to renew their nature; and of eternal happineſs after this life, to all ſuch as ſhould endeavour to purify themſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit.

Indeed, there were people then (as there are now many) who were under no apprehenſions of danger; who lived at all adventures, and feared no evil, or who had an high opinion of their own goodneſs; and theſe, as the Scriptures inform us, *rejected the counſel of God*, and his offers of mercy.

And is not the caſe the ſame at this day? Are not people in as much danger now? Have not

not they the very tokens of ſin and damnation upon them? And yet are as eaſy as if they were to be ſaved without any concern of their own. Pray hear what God declares, by his prophet:[1] *To this man will I look*, [that is, in mercy] *even to him that is poor, and of a contrite heart, and trembleth at my word.*

And why are theſe diſpoſitions neceſſary to obtain the favour of God in Jeſus Chriſt? The reaſons are plain: 1*ſt*. That men, reflecting upon the miſery of their condition, may truly value the favour of their deliverance. 2*dly*. That the power of God may appear in the converſion of ſinners, who had no power to help themſelves. 3*dly*. That thoſe who have felt the burthen of a troubled conſcience, and have been once truly afraid of the wrath of God, may ever after walk more circumſpectly. And *laſtly*; That, being truly ſenſible of the danger they have eſcaped, the duties of religion, which are otherwiſe uneaſy to fleſh and blood, may be more cheerfully embraced.

And now you ſee how neceſſary it is that we ſhould be convinced of the miſery of our condition, and of our own inability to help ourſelves, before we can even be diſpoſed to look upon the goſpel as a real bleſſing, much leſs receive it with that joy and thankfulneſs which ſo great a favour requires. You ſee how people come to differ; ſome *believing*, and

[1] Iſaiah lxvi. 2.

others

others *ſlighting, the very ſame truths.* The plain account of which is, that ſome fear God, and are afraid for themſelves, and are concerned for what may come hereafter; while others live at all adventures, and fear no evil, nor are they concerned to prevent it.

Hence it appears, that it is not always for want of reaſons that men do not believe, but very often from an unwillingneſs to receive the truth. Therefore Jeſus Chriſt is ſaid to be a *ſtumbling-block*, becauſe men of wicked lives and principles could not receive his doctrine. *Hearing, ye ſhall hear, and not underſtand*, becauſe of their obſtinacy, pride, worldly-mindedneſs, &c. Now; this the ſcripture aſſures us,[m] was their condemnation, which could not have been, unleſs the will of God had been ſufficiently made known to them, ſo as that a well-diſpoſed perſon might have eaſily perceived it.

And the concluſion of all will be, that nothing in nature is ſo proper to beget a true faith in Jeſus Chriſt, as a true and lively ſenſe of our condition, a feeling and an aſſurance that things are moſt wretchedly amiſs with us. For when we are once indeed convinced, that our ſins make us altogether unworthy of God's favour;—that our weakneſs, without his grace, will expoſe us to all manner of wickedneſs;—that our ſins make us liable to a ſevere account, which, unleſs his mercy in-

[m] John iii. 19.

terpoſes,

terpoſes, will ſink us into everlaſting ruin;—why then, Jeſus Chriſt will be thought a bleſſing, becauſe *he* only can cure us of theſe fears,—*he* only can help our infirmities,—*he* only can teach and enable us to pleaſe God while we live, and make death a bleſſing to us when we die.

In one word; *he* only can cure all our fears, except ſuch as are neceſſary to keep us awake, and eaſe all our burthens.

After all, I beſeech you do not imagine that the only end of Chriſt's coming into the world was to eaſe us of our fears. For aſſuredly one great end of his taking our nature upon him was, to free the world from wickedneſs, and that blindneſs and groſs ignorance which occaſioned it. *For this purpoſe* (ſaith St. John, iii. 8) *was the Son of God manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the devil.*

Whoever are not diſpoſed to let the goſpel have this effect upon them, *to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*, will have no reaſon to rejoice that the goſpel is preached unto them; which contains threatenings, and much ſeverer puniſhments, than ever the law of Nature could ſuggeſt, or the law of Moſes made mention of. *Weeping*, and *wailing*, and *gnaſhing of teeth*, for ever and ever, are puniſhments not to be ſpoken of, not to be thought of, without fear and trembling.

God

God Almighty fill all our hearts with ſuch an holy fear of his judgments, that we may look upon the goſpel as a bleſſing, ſince by it we are ſhewn a way to eſcape, and enabled to work out our own ſalvation, through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour.

To whom, &c. be glory both now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

THE DUTY OF THE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL, AND THE UNHAPPY STATE OF THOSE WHO HOLD THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

O God, terrible in judgment, how ought I to tremble, when I undertake to perſuade others to fear thy diſpleaſure, when the knowledge of thy word and judgments have had ſo little effect upon myſelf. Pardon, O merciful God, this ſinful ſecurity in myſelf, and all that preach thy word, and in all that ſhall hear us; and enable us ſo effectually to perſuade others, both by our life and ſermons, that it is an evil thing and bitter to be under thy diſpleaſure; that ſeeing our danger, and feeling our miſery, and the diſeaſe we labour under, we may thankfully embrace the means which thy goodneſs has provided for our recovery, and joyfully cloſe with that gracious invitation of thy Bleſſed Son—"Come "unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give "you reſt." Grant this, for his ſake, O Bleſſed God. Amen.

2 COR. V. 11.

KNOWING THE TERROR OF THE LORD, WE PERSUADE MEN,[a]

THERE never, ſure, was a time more neceſſary to ſet the terrors of the Lord before men *than this*, when the generality of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians either do

[a] See Iſaiah lxi. 1.; lxvi. 2. Pſ. xxxiv. 18.; xc. 11.; cxix. 118. Eccleſ. xii. 4. Matth. xi. 28. Luke xii. 5. John vii. 37. Phil. ii. 12. Gal. v. 19. James ii. 19.

not

not know, or have forgotten, for what end they came into the world;—how they ought to live in it;—or what is like to become of them when they go out of it.

Now; as the neceſſity of perſuading people to be more concerned for themſelves is very great, ſo are the reaſons made uſe of by the Spirit of God the moſt *terrible* and the moſt *awakening*. What are they? We find them in the verſe before the text, and they are theſe: *We muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt that every one may receive the things done in his body*, that is, in this life, *according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Which the Son of God, who is to be the judge of the world, explains in theſe very words,[b] *All that are in the graves ſhall come forth: they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we perſuade men.*

You ſee, Chriſtians, who thoſe are that are ſuppoſed in an eſpecial manner to know this terror of the Lord. They are the miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt. You hear alſo whence they have this knowledge of God's purpoſe, to call all men to an account, even from the Son of God himſelf, who came down from heaven to make this known unto men, in order to ſave them from ruining themſelves.

I pray you, therefore, take notice, brethren, that the words we make uſe of to *awaken*,

[b] John v. 29.

awaken, to *perſuade*, and to *convince* you, are not the arguments of ſinful men like yourſelves; for they are the arguments of God himſelf, the God of Truth and Mercy, who would have all men to know, and ſavingly to believe, theſe truths, that they may be happy for ever, and that they may eſcape eternal miſery.

Our duty, as Miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, in the firſt place, is, ourſelves to be thoroughly convinced of the great importance of theſe dreadful truths, that we may be better able and diſpoſed to convince and perſuade others, what an evil thing and bitter it is to forſake the Lord, and forget theſe important truths:—That we and you muſt all give an account to God; that we ſhall be judged according to our works; and that this is the only time in which we are to provide for that great account.

And indeed, if theſe truths will not perſuade both us, and you, to conſider what we have to do, and to live like people who hope to be able to give a comfortable account of themſelves, we ſhall be ruined, as ſure as theſe are the words of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

To oblige *us* to do *our* duty faithfully the Spirit of God makes uſe of this as the ſtrongeſt reaſon and argument, *They* (that is, the Miniſters of Chriſt) *do watch for your ſouls, as they that muſt give an account.*[c] A conſidera-

[c] Heb. xiii. 17.

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tion ſo very terrible, that it is enough to make the beſt of God's Miniſters to tremble, as often as they conſider what they have undertaken, and the account, the great account, they have to give, not only for themſelves and their own actions, but becauſe they ſtand charged and are accountable for others.

And, O! that God would communicate to us all, ſuch a degree of concern, of grace, and zeal, as is neceſſary for the work we have undertaken, and the account we have to give!

We ſhould then never ceaſe to put you in mind of the account which *you*, as well as *we*, have to give, when we are to leave this world; and the dreadful hazard they all run, who defer their repentance, and who are not careful to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and anſwerable to amendment of life.

Let me therefore beg of you all, (who underſtand me) to conſider the following truths, which I am going to lay before you; that being by them awakened out of that deadly ſleep and indifference into which Satan has caſt the unthinking world, we may look about us, and ſee where it will end at the laſt. *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we perſuade men.* To what would we perſuade them? Why, firſt of all, to give credit to the God that made them, who has made himſelf, and his will and purpoſes, known unto men, by HIS SPIRIT, by HIS WORD, and by HIS ONLY SON.

For

For inſtance; he has repreſented himſelf as a God *merciful, long-ſuffering, plenteous in goodneſs*, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to the knowledge of the truth, and be ſaved. On the other hand, he has declared, that ſuch as obey not the truth, but have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs, ſuch as neglect or deſpiſe his goodneſs, his will and commands, and the means of grace and ſalvation which he has appointed;—he has declared, that all ſuch ſhall find him *a God terrible in judgment*.

Sure, nobody expects that the Miniſters of Chriſt ſhould go about to prove theſe things:—*That we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*;—that every man ſhall then receive according to what he has done in this life, whether it has been good or evil; that the wicked ſhall then be ſent into everlasting puniſhment, and the righteous into life eternal. There can be no greater proof than that *the Son of God* has declared this.

What then have the Miniſters of Chriſt to do? Why; to endeavour to perſuade men, by that love which every man ought to have for his own ſoul, to think how he will be able to anſwer, in the firſt place, for the crime of not believing the Son of God, whom God ſent into the world to make his will known unto men. This (believe it, Chriſtians) will be found to be no ſmall crime; *he that believeth not ſhall be damned*.[d]

[d] Mark xvi. 16.

Theſe

Theſe are not *our* words, but the very words of the Son of God.

You will ſay, perhaps, all Chriſtians do believe the goſpel. Would to God we all did believe as we ought to do! But to *believe* is not enough to juſtify us before God, unleſs our faith obliges us to live as becomes Chriſtians.

To love, to fear, and to glorify God; to be ſober, chaſte, and temperate; to be juſt and charitable to men; and after all, which is the perfection of ſaving faith, to confeſs before God, that when we have done all theſe things, it is all owing to the mere mercy of God, to his grace, his aſſiſtance, and to the merits of Jeſus Chriſt and his interceſſion, that God will accept and reward our faith, and our poor endeavours to pleaſe him. This is the caſe and conſequence of a true and ſaving faith.

I will ſet before you the fruits of an *unprofitable faith*—the faith of too many pretended Chriſtians, who know the goſpel, but live as if not one word of it were true; who make light of ſins of the moſt damning nature; who will not be perſuaded to fear the wrath of God, till they ſhall feel it to their everlaſting ſorrow.

Now, to awaken and terrify ſuch unhappy ſinners as hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs, the Lord Jeſus himſelf has given us the very ſentence that ſhall be paſſed upon ſuch, when

he

he ſhall come to judge the world in juſtice; *Go, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire.* A ſentence ſo frightful, that one can hardly repeat it without trembling, who ever would but ſay to himſelf, what if this ſhould be the ſentence to be paſſed upon myſelf!

Now, this is the ſentence which ſhall moſt ſurely be paſſed upon every ſin unrepented of; ſuch as, *injuſtice*, *fraud*, *oppreſſion*, and *covetouſneſs*, which is the root of theſe and many other evils. This will be the curſed end of all unlawful pleaſures, of *adultery*, *fornication*, and *drunkenneſs*, which too often leads to theſe. This will be the reward of living in malice, envy, and hatred. This is what will be got, by all unlawful ways of getting eſtates, of cunning and cheating bargains. This will be the end of diſhonouring God, his name, his word, and ſacraments. In ſhort, this will be the dreadful puniſhment of hypocriſy, of pretending to be Chriſtians without Chriſtianity.

Theſe truths being as ſure as the God who hath declared them, what is it which makes ſo many go on in a careleſs way of living, as if there were no truth in them? Why; either they do not know what a dreadful thing it is to be a ſinner, and under the diſpleaſure of God, or what will certainly be the puniſhment of ſin unrepented of; or they reſolve to repent before they die; or they depend upon the mercy of God, and hope he will

will not be ſo ſevere as he has threatened; or that they ſhall fare no worſe than other people; or, laſtly, that it is in vain to hope for pardon, their ſins have been ſo great, and ſo long continued in. All theſe, God knows, are ſad deluſions.

Sin is not ſo light a matter as Chriſtians are apt to think. It was the occaſion of the loſs of paradiſe to our firſt parents; it was what provoked the juſtice of God to drown a wicked world; and, after that, to deſtroy a number of cities by fire from heaven.

And, to ſhew his hatred of ſin, and to make men dread it, he has made known to us, that he ſpared not a race of creatures higher than the higheſt on earth, but caſt thoſe very angels that ſinned into hell, where he has declared, that all ſuch as follow them in their rebellion ſhall with them be doomed to their puniſhment.

Theſe frightful truths are recorded in ſcripture, to awaken us;—to make men afraid of ſin, and of ruining themſelves by it; and are proper to ſhake the moſt careleſs, the proudeſt, the ſtubborneſt ſinner, who is not given over to a reprobate mind.

And I have repeated them, to put you and myſelf in mind, to conſider what we have to do; not to make light of ſin, which coſt Jeſus Chriſt his life and blood; and that any who have been ſo unhappy as hitherto to have lived in ſin, in any known ſin, may ſee what

what it will certainly end in, if not forſaken and repented of. As alſo, to put every one of us upon thinking what is like to be our caſe a few years hence, when with reſpect to us the world will be at an end, and *when the night will come when no man can work.* And laſtly when we muſt give an account to God, how we lived in this ſtate of trial; what good, and what evil, we have done; when Satan will be ready to accuſe us; when our own conſcience will tell us what he ſaith is true; when we cannot ſay with truth that we had made our peace with God before we left this world; and when we ſhall have nothing to ſay, but to ſtand ſpeechleſs, expecting a ſentence which is dreadful even to be repeated.

When this ſhall be the caſe *as moſt ſurely it will*, of every one who lives and dies in ſin; it will then be too late to wiſh that they had hearkened to the miniſters of God, when they would have perſuaded them to conſider, before it was too late, the anguiſh of a ſoul that ſhall find itſelf ſhut out of heaven, and ſentenced to a miſery that ſhall laſt for ever.

I know what every one who hears this will be apt to ſay to himſelf, *God forbid that this ſhould ever be my caſe!* and to be ſure every Chriſtian will ſay *Amen.* But then, whoever hopes that this may not be his own caſe, muſt ſuffer himſelf to be perſuaded, and to believe, that his future and everlaſting ſtate of happineſs or miſery will certainly be according to

his faith in God, and the manner of the life he leads in this world, where we all have our time and ſtate of trial.

And now, my Chriſtian brethren, I take it for granted, that ſo many as have heard theſe truths with ſerioufneſs will be touched with ſome degree and ſenſe of the danger they may poſſibly be liable to. And ſuch a concern may, through the grace of God, lead them to enquire, whether they have been Chriſtians in name only, and not in deed and in truth; or, to ſpeak plainly, whether they are in the way of *ſalvation* or *damnation.*

Theſe are two words of the greateſt concern to every man who is in his right mind. For (and a ſad truth it is) very many there are who are not ſo, *who are given over to a reprobate mind*, to a mind void of judgment; who having hardened themſelves in ſin, ſo as to be *paſt feeling*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks,[e] are not terrified with words of the greateſt dread and thoughtfulneſs to ſuch whoſe conſcience is awake, who are afraid for themſelves, and for the account they muſt one day give to God, the ſearcher of hearts.

Where now ſhall a perſon who labours under theſe fears, where ſhall he ſeek for help; —where may he hope to find comfort;—who ſhall deliver ſuch a wretched man from a condition worſe than death? St. Paul has anſwered this queſtion. It is *the grace, the mercy of God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*, which alone

[e] Eph. iv. 19.

alone can deliver us from this bondage. To him, God the Father has committed the care of the ſouls of men; he has paid the price of their redemption by his moſt precious blood. And, to convince ſinners how much he pities the ſad condition and danger they have brought themſelves into, he hath made this following moſt kind and merciful invitation to every ſon and daughter of Adam:[f] *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.*

Here is, Chriſtians, as gracious an invitation as ever was made to man. All that are in pain and fear, on account of their former ſins;—all that are ſenſible of their former defects and backſlidings;—all that are ſenſible that of themſelves they want power to overcome the corruption of their nature;—all that ſincerely deſire to pleaſe God, and to avoid every thing that may diſpleaſe him; in ſhort, *all, all without exception*, even the greateſt ſinners, are invited, with a ſure promiſe of a remedy for all the evils they feel or fear. For no leſs a phyſician, no leſs a perſon, than the Son of God, inviteth, and hath promiſed to relieve and help them.

But, O Jeſus! how few are there, when we look into the world, how few are there, who are ſenſible that they want thy help! How few who apply to thee for help, as they ought to do

[f] Matth. xi. 28.

We do not ſpeak of thoſe who live without God in the world;—who deſpiſe the goſpel of Chriſt, and the ſalvation offered in it;—who make a mock of ſin and of hell;—for theſe are plainly *given over to a mind void of judgment:* and it is no wonder, that this merciful invitation of Jeſus Chriſt doth not affect them;—nobody expects it from them.

But what ſhall we ſay, when the generality of Chriſtians, ſuch as pretend to hope for ſalvation, do not appear to be much concerned in this gracious invitation? So few being convinced that they ſtand in need of a Redeemer, of pardon, of help to do their duty, of grace to pleaſe God; infinite, therefore, are the number, even of the profeſſors of Chriſtianity, who ſeem not to be much concerned in this invitation of the only Saviour of the world.

The reaſon is this:—None are concerned to look out for help, but ſuch as are ſenſible they want help: *They that are whole* (ſaith our Lord) *need not a phyſician, but they that are ſick. I came not* (ſaith he) *to call the righteous*, ſuch as think themſelves ſafe, *but ſinners to repentance.*

And indeed it is with the diſeaſes of our ſouls, as it is with thoſe of our bodies. If we feel little or no pain, we are not much concerned; and yet a dead palſy, or a lethargy, are as mortal as a wound that makes us feel ſmart, and gives us pain. Thus it is with regard to the diſeaſes of the ſoul. And it is certainly

certainly one of the heavieſt of God's judgments for a man not to be afraid for himſelf.

It concerns, therefore, every man to know what reaſon he has to be afraid for himſelf, and to know that he ſtands in need of help. This was the caſe of the church of Laodicea;[g] *Thou ſayeſt that thou art rich, and wanteſt nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* This is a ſad caſe, and yet it is the caſe (God knows) of too many Chriſtians, as appears plainly by that great unconcernedneſs to be ſeen in the lives of Chriſtians; who generally ſatisfy themſelves, and place their hopes of ſafety and happineſs, in being free from ſcandalous ſins, ſuch as the magiſtrate would puniſh;—in obſerving the outward duties of Chriſtianity, ſuch as the moſt unconverted perſon may perform, without being ſenſible of the bondage of ſin, and that their religion muſt mend their corrupt nature before they die, or they muſt never expect to be ſaved.

It was in order to awaken ſuch as would attend, and to prevent ſuch deluſions, that you were, in the firſt part of this diſcourſe, put in mind of the account we muſt all give, how we have ſpent our lives here, and of the happineſs or miſery that will certainly follow ſuch an account.

And this was done, in order to perſuade you, every man for himſelf, to endeavour to work out his ſalvation with fear and trembling;

[g] Rev. iii. 17.

bling; that is, with a concern of one whoſe ſoul is at ſtake; that you may be prepared to hearken to the invitation of Jeſus Chriſt to make you happy.

To this man, (ſaith God) *will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word.*[h] A true ſenſe and confeſſion of our miſery will, you ſee, move the pity of God; a deep ſenſe of our own weakneſs, and inability to help ourſelves, will engage his power to aſſiſt us; and a ſenſe of our own unworthineſs will move his compaſſion.

Whoever therefore among you feareth God, to you is this invitation of Jeſus Chriſt made: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.* So that it will be our own fault entirely, if we are not freed from all our fears of periſhing eternally; if we have not all the aſſiſtance that our hearts can deſire, to bring us to heaven and happineſs everlaſting.

Let us therefore conſider, what it is to go to Chriſt. It is to believe him to be the Son of God, ſent by his Father out of pity to his poor creatures, to deliver them out of ſlavery and bondage, into which they were moſt miſerably fallen. It is to become his diſciples; to receive him as our *teacher*, in making known to us the will of God for our ſalvation. It is to receive him as our *prieſt*, who hath reconciled us to God, by offering up himſelf a ſacrifice, to ſatisfy the divine juſtice, and

[h] Iſaiah lxvi. 2.

and who is continually making interceſſion for all ſuch as go unto God by him. And laſtly, it is to acknowledge him as *our Lord and King*; that as ſuch we are to obey his laws, and ſuffer him to rule and govern us.

All, therefore, who will effectually cloſe with this gracious invitation of Jeſus Chriſt, muſt receive him, as our *lord*, to govern us by his goſpel;—as our only *mediator*, to prevail with God for our pardon;—and as our only *redeemer*, who laid down his life for us.

You ſee, my Chriſtian brethren, the gracious methods which God has made uſe of to awaken us, and to raiſe in our minds a ſpirit of fear, by letting us know, that we are to give an account for all the things we have done in the body, whether they have been good or bad; to the end that we may more gladly hearken to the merciful invitation of Jeſus Chriſt—who knows the exceeding danger we are in without his help; and our ſouls being precious in his ſight, he therefore moſt kindly invites us to come to him, for light, for direction, for help, and ſalvation. And he has graciouſly promiſed to give reſt and peace to all that come to him, and are ſenſible of their wants and danger. He will convince them, that he has made their peace with God. He will aſſiſt them by his Spirit, ſo that ſin ſhall not get dominion over them. And he will intercede with God, to grant us that happineſs for which we were at firſt created.

I am

I am merciful, (ſaith the Lord) *and I will not keep anger for ever: only acknowledge thine iniquities, and that thou haſt tranſgreſſed againſt the Lord.*[1]—This is the language of God to ſinners: *A broken and contrite heart he will not deſpiſe.*

What now is required on our part to make this gracious invitation of Chriſt a perfect bleſſing to us? Why, to believe in him with all our heart; for *whoever believeth in him ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

But then this faith muſt be ſuch as ſhall purify our hearts; ſuch as ſhall lead us to repentance; ſuch *as ſhall bring forth fruits anſwerable to amendment of life.*

And this faith, being the gift of God, muſt be begged of him with the earneſtneſs of a ſoul that is weary and heavy-laden, and ſuch ſhall moſt certainly find reſt unto their ſouls.

In one word; our great and only comfort is, in all our troubles, after all our miſcarriages, under all our fears, that we have a SAVIOUR to go to, who even invites us to come to him. A Saviour, who came down from heaven to ſeek and to ſave his loſt creatures. A Saviour, who has redeemed us by his precious blood;—who has made our peace with God;—who is at the right hand of God, making interceſſion for us;—who invites all, none excepted, to come to him;—and to whom none ever did go, as they ought to do, but found reſt unto their ſouls.

But

[1] Jer. iii. 12.

But it muſt be thou, O Jeſus, who came to ſeek and to ſave thoſe that were loſt and gone aſtray;—it muſt be Thou, O Lord, who doſt ſo graciouſly invite us, that muſt lead us to thyſelf, or we ſhall ſurely miſs the way.

Direct, gracious Lord, all ſuch as deſire to come to Thee. As Thou giveſt them a will, be Thoe their guide, their light, and their ſupport, till they come to Thee, and to that inheritance which Thou haſt prepared for all thoſe that obey thy kind invitation. And this we beg for thy promiſe ſake, for thy mercy's ſake, and for the ſake of that love which Thou haſt had for our ſouls.

For which all glory, and praiſe, and thanks, be aſcribed to Thee, together with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, by us and by all thy faithful ſervants, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

THE DESIGN AND HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

O Bleſſed Jeſus, who came into the world to ſave ſinners, direct and guide me by thy good Spirit, that in this and all my labours for the inſtruction of my flock, I may ſet forth the mercy, the glory, and the goodneſs of God; and that by ſo doing, I may ſave myſelf, and thoſe that hear me.

1 TIM. i. 15. TIT. ii. 14. 1 TIM. iv. 1.

JESUS CHRIST CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS:—AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, AND PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE, [THAT IS, A PEOPLE PECULIARLY CONSECRATED TO HIM] ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS. NOW THE SPIRIT SPEAKETH EXPRESSLY, THAT IN THE LATTER TIMES SOME SHALL DEPART FROM THE FAITH, GIVING HEED TO SEDUCING SPIRITS, AND DOCTRINES OF DEVILS; AND [*JUDE* 4] TURNING THE GRACE OF GOD INTO LASCIVIOUSNESS.[a]

WHAT I would now recommend to your ſerious conſideration, are theſe following particulars:—

First; The great and merciful deſign of the Chriſtian religion.

[a] See Matth. vii. 16, 22; and xv. 9. 1 Cor. x. 12. Gal. i. 4. 2 Pet. iii. 3. Rev. ii. 5.

Secondly;

Secondly; How ſadly, and by what means, this gracious deſign of God has been hindered or perverted.

Laſtly; What is like to be the conſequence of this ſad apoſtacy of Chriſtians of all denominations, if we do not return to a better mind; and how every Chriſtian may contribute towards reſtoring Chriſtianity to its great deſign of ſaving ſinners.

Now; the deſign of Chriſtianity, the apoſtle tells us, is *to ſave ſinners*, and that *Jeſus Chriſt came into the world for that very end.* And that the only way of ſaving them was, *by redeemiug them from all iniquity:* foraſmcuh as all mankind were ſlaves to the devil, and to his temptations; to the world, and its wicked cuſtoms; and to their own corrupt inclinations; Jeſus Chriſt therefore came to redeem them from this ſlavery, and from eternal miſery and death; and to gain to himſelf a people who ſhould be conſecrated in a peculiar manner to his ſervice; and that being purified by an holy life, and good works, they might be capable of heaven, and of eternal happineſs.

This was tha great deſign of God in ſending his Son intp the world. And happy would it have been, if this gracious deſign had been univerſally cloſed with, and had not been perverted by the weakneſs of men, and by the wiles of the devil.

The Spirit of God foreſaw this, and by his apoſtle gives Chriſtians warning of it, and

that

that *in the latter times, men ſhall depart from the faith, giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits, and doctrines of devils; turning the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs*; that is, accommodating and ſuiting the doctrine of the goſpel to the corrupt inclinations of men.

We ſhall ſee, in the hiſtory of Chriſtianity which I ſhall ſet before you, how theſe ſeducing ſpirits have ſucceeded in all ages, in this attempt; that Chriſtians may beware of falling into the ſnare of the devil, and may be careful to have the true deſign of the Chriſtian religion always in their eye; which is, *to make men holy, that they may be happy.*

All men being by nature *ſinners*, as ſuch God could take no pleaſure in them. Man had paſſed through ſeveral ſtates of trial before the publiſhing of the goſpel by Jeſus Chriſt;—in a ſtate of innocence before the fall;—in the ſtate of nature after the fall, with all the advantages of reaſon and free-will;—and laſtly, under the law, with all the helps of outward ordinances. And the concluſion always was, as the Apoſtle obſerves both of Gentiles and Jews, *They were altogether abominable; there was none good.*

Almighty God, therefore, whoſe juſtice would not let wickedneſs go unpuniſhed, and whoſe infinite goodneſs would not let his poor creatures be loſt, in his good time *ſent his own beloved Son into the world*, to ſave ſinners out of this ſad condition.

In

In order to this great and merciful deſign, his Son took our nature upon him, and in that nature fulfilled the whole will of God. He ſet us an example, how we muſt live ſo as to pleaſe God; and to ſatisfy the juſtice of God, he ſuffered that death which every man living has for his own ſins deſerved. And laſtly, he left us his goſpel, as a rule to live by, and ſent his Holy Spirit from heaven to ſupply his place on earth, and to aſſiſt and conduct his faithful ſervants to heaven.

Thus *Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners*; and few or none but ſinners received him or his doctrine; that is, ſuch whoſe hearts God had touched, and filled with a ſalutary fear for themſelves, and a concern to know whether God would accept of a ſinner's repentance; which was a queſtion the Jews themſelves did not know how to reſolve, there being no ſacrifice appointed in the law for great and crying ſins. And as for the heathens, they knew nothing at all of it.

Jeſus Chriſt, and *he* only, could give ſinners full ſatisfaction in this matter: for he came from God; his works ſhewed that he did ſo; he knew the mind of God, for he was his beloved Son; and he aſſured mankind, that God would accept of the ſincere repentance of the greateſt ſinner,—would not only pardon what was paſt, but would receive him into favour, and treat him as if he had never done amiſs.

This

This was moſt welcome news to ſuch as were weary and heavy laden with the burthen of their ſins. As for ſuch as were in no fear for themſelves, nor under any concern for what muſt come hereafter; to awaken them, he made known ſuch important truths as theſe:—That there is a life after death, and a life that is to laſt for ever;—that good ſouls will be made happy, and that wicked ſouls will be puniſhed to all eternity.

Now; this diſcovery of what muſt come hereafter ſtartled all ſuch as had any ſort of ſerioufneſs. They ſaw plainly, that die they muſt, and in a very ſhort time; and that, if what Jeſus Chriſt did aſſure them was true, they had no choice but either to be happy or miſerable, and that for ever.

And that which increaſed their fears was, that they found in their very nature an averſion and diſability, to do ſuch good works as were neceſſary to entitle them to happineſs; —and a proneneſs to evil continually, which muſt of neceſſity ſubject them to miſery.

Here Jeſus Chriſt and his goſpel came in to their relief; for he gave them the utmoſt aſſurance, that, upon their conſecrating themſelves to God, God would give them a Spirit, which ſhould change their hearts, their thoughts, their deſires, for the better; a Spirit which ſhould enable them to believe, and to do, ſuch things as by nature they had neither a will nor a power to do; and that after

that, it would be their own fault if they came ſhort of eternal happineſs, and if they eſcaped not eternal miſery.

It was upon theſe motives that people at firſt became Chriſtians. They were baptized, and received that Holy Spirit which Jeſus Chriſt had promiſed, whereby they were enlightened in their underſtandings, and enabled to do and to ſuffer whatever the goſpel required of them, and to run all hazards in this world, rather than loſe the happineſs they hoped for, or be liable to the miſery they feared, in the next.

And this was to them another proof of the truth of the goſpel, that had wrought ſuch a change in them for the better, which neither their own reaſon, nor all the rules of the wiſe men of the world, were able to effect.

For they found, by an happy experience, that they could renounce ſuch pleaſures as were inconſiſtent with a chriſtian life, though grateful to fleſh and blood. They became ſerious and thoughtful how to pleaſe God; and every day more unconcerned for ſuch things as the reſt of the world doted on. They were charitable and kind to one another. They ſuffered loſſes and perſecutions with patience, as men believing that ſuch things are not to be accounted of in compariſon of heaven and hell.

In ſhort, all that became Chriſtians upon ſuch motives as theſe, (that is, of the neceſ-

ſity

ſity of being holy in order to be happy) all ſuch became holy and exemplary for all worthy actions. They were peaceable in their lives, chaſte in their converſation, juſt in their dealings, conſtant in their devotions, and zealous for the honour of God. They abhorred the wicked courſes of the world, ſuch as whoredom and drunkenneſs; lying, perjury, and covetouſneſs; and all other crimes, which they were aſſured, by Jeſus Chriſt and his goſpel, would ſhut them out of heaven. And if there were any amongſt them, who, forgetting the deſign of Chriſtianity, fell into crimes unworthy the Chriſtian name, they were immediately turned out of the Chriſtian ſociety, by the ſtrict and godly diſcipline of thoſe days, until they ſhould give ſober proofs of their amendment.

This was the ſtate of the Chriſtian religion for the firſt three hundred years after Chriſt's aſcenſion into heaven; during which time it ſpread itſelf over the face of the whole known world.

And this it did, notwithſtanding its doctrines and commands were directly oppoſite to the corrupt nature and prejudices of mankind, and to all the religions and corrupt uſages of the world.

And this was another proof of the truth of Chriſtianity, That it ſhould (as our Lord foretold) be preached and received in all the world;—that it ſhould be received without

any outward force to compel men, without any countenance of great and learned men to perſuade them, without any proſpect of worldly intereſt to induce them to embrace it.

And one thing is here fit to be obſerved, becauſe it is a confirmation of a truth which Jeſus Chriſt very often told his followers;—That *riches*, and worldly *powers*, and great *authority*, were great hindrances to the receiving his goſpel. And accordingly, St. Paul takes notice,[b] *That not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called.* It being very hard to fleſh and blood to renounce the love of riches, the eſteem of learning, and the pleaſure of authority and power, and to ſubmit to be poor in ſpirit, to be deſpiſed, and thought ignorant, for Chriſt's ſake.

And experience ſtill ſhews us, that what Chriſtianity is left in the world, is generally to be found amongſt ſuch as want theſe temptations. It is amongſt them we muſt look for a truſt in God, a faith in his promiſes, a ſubmiſſion to his will, and a conformity to Jeſus Chriſt, humbled and made of no reputation. For if we go a little higher, we find, too often, either an exceſſive love for the riches of the world, and for the pleaſures they afford; or an exceſſive pride, a proneneſs to libertiniſm, looſe principles, or downright infidelity.

But to return to our ſubject. While men became Chriſtians out of a pure deſire *to ſave their ſouls*, Chriſtianity was preſerved in its purity,

[b] 1 Cor. i. 26.

purity, and converts were made, more by the holineſs of the lives of Chriſtians, than by their learning or other arguments. Till at laſt, ſomething above three hundred years after Chriſt, the rulers of the world themſelves (many of them) became Chriſtians; and then people, inſtead of being perſecuted or reproached for being Chriſtians, were countenanced, eſteemed, and rewarded, for the religion they profeſſed.

And then, we may be aſſured of it, many became Chriſtians for intereſt, for faſhion ſake, or out of mere humour, without ever conſidering what Chriſtianity required of them,—what they promiſed to believe and do, —or what they ſhould be better or worſe for it hereafter.

So that holineſs of life, and the ſaving of their ſouls, not being what they propoſed by becoming Chriſtians, nor the conſequence of their being ſuch; the *ſeducing ſpirit* ſoon took an advantage of this, and led them to diſhonour their holy profeſſion. It was then that the prophecy of our Lord[c] was fulfilled: *While men ſlept, the enemy came and ſowed tares among the wheat*; &c. And this he did, firſt, by attacking the faith of Chriſtians, and introducing all manner of hereſies, ſo that good Chriſtians were diſtracted, and their zeal for propagating of holineſs of life was diverted too much, while they were obliged to defend the very principles of chriſtianity.

[c] Matth. xiii. 25.

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Theſe heats being in ſome meaſure abated, and the breaches made up, his next attempt was upon the morals and lives of Chriſtians.

Such as embraced Chriſtianity out of cuſtom were not very careful to live according to its rules and laws; at the ſame time, they had the holy ſcriptures in their hands, and they had the examples of Chriſt and his ſincere followers before them, which ſhewed them plainly that they were not what they ſhould be.

The conſequence of this was, that ſuch as were not willing to part with their ſins, and to lead a true chriſtian life, and yet durſt not renounce their religion, endeavoured to find out ways to make their minds eaſy, which they could not well do, whenever they compared their lives with the precepts of the goſpel, which yet they had in their hands.

And this brought a thouſand corruptions into the church: every thing but holineſs of life, and renouncing the devil, the world, and the fleſh, were greedily embraced.

In theſe times of ignorance, ſuperſtition, and wickedneſs, it pleaſed God to open men's eyes by the Reformation. The holy Bible was tranſlated into the language of moſt nations. And would to God the ſeducing ſpirit ſpoken of in the text, and his agents, had not prevailed ſo far as to cauſe too many to make a very ill uſe of the knowledge which they might have had from God's word; but ſo it is. And many, who know their duty, *do hold the truth*

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in unrighteouſneſs; and too, too many do ſpend their zeal, and which is generally all the religion they have, in unneceſſary diſputes.

But what is ſtill more mournful, there is in theſe days a ſpirit of infidelity, of libertiniſm, and profaneneſs, gone out into the world, which was not known in former ages. And this, not only amongſt proteſtants; but all good and ſober men of the church of Rome make the ſame ſad complaint. That there are ſome, who, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, bring in damnable hereſies, denying the Lord that redeemed them. Others who make a mock of all religion;—deride the way and the means of ſalvation;—profane the name of God after the moſt aſtoniſhing manner;—make a jeſt of Chriſt and his ordinances;—do deſpite to his word, his day, his worſhip, and his miniſters;—and who are, in all reſpects, worſe than the Pagans who know not God.

Laſtly; There are others, who profeſs to know and to believe in God, and yet in effect deny him, while they countenance thoſe that deſpiſe him and his laws; while they are pleaſed with the converſation of men that ſhew no manner of reſpect for *the Lord Jeſus, who came into the world to ſave ſinners.*

Be aſſured of it, good Chriſtians, theſe are agents of thoſe ſeducing ſpirits ſpoken of by the apoſtle; and whoever comes near them is in danger of being infected and ruined. For God will not be mocked. If men will *walk*

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in the counſel of the ungodly, and ſtand in the way of ſinners, God will give them up at laſt *to ſit in the ſeat of the ſcornful*; that is, to arrive at an height of wickedneſs, which once they were amazed at; and ſcorning to be kept within the bounds of religion, they will therefore endeavour to make it ridiculous and contemptible.

And this is the true cauſe of the corruption both of faith and manners, which is ſo juſtly lamented.

The corrupt nature of man, being deſirous to live under as few reſtraints as poſſible, firſt invents ways to keep up the hopes of heaven, without parting with any ſatisfaction on earth; and ſo the faith comes to be corrupted.

When that will not do, and men will not part with their ſins, nothing but atheiſm can make them eaſy. By atheiſm, I mean ſuch a way of living as obliges them firſt to *wiſh*, and then to *ſay*, THERE IS NO GOD; and ſo the lives of Chriſtians come to be corrupted. But then how dreadful muſt their caſe be, who have nothing to depend on, but the hopes that the word of God, his promiſes, and his threatenings, may not be true! This is a ſad blindneſs indeed! But it is the juſt and natural puniſhment of a wicked life.

And now you ſee, in the ſhort hiſtory of the Chriſtian Religion which I have given you; you ſee, how far the Chriſtian world is departed from that concern, that zeal, that piety,

piety, and conſtancy, which animated thoſe that firſt embraced chriſtianity. And yet we have the ſame reaſons that they had, to be very much concerned for what muſt become of us when we die.

Were *they* ſinners? ſo are *we*. Had *they* reaſons, as ſinners, to be afraid for themſelves; and have not *we* the ſame reaſons? Are not heaven and hell ſtill in being? Are not theſe ſtill to be the portion of good and bad men, as each ſhall deſerve? Have not *we* the ſame hopes, and the ſame promiſes, that *they* had? Did not Jeſus Chriſt come into the world to ſave us, as well as them? Is there any other way of being ſaved, but what they took? that is, to conſecrate ourſelves to his ſervice, and to be zealous of good works.

Jeſus Chriſt came *to redeem us from all iniquity*, to *deliver us from this preſent evil world*. Is the world leſs wicked now than it was then? How comes it then that we are ſo little apprehenſive of its ſnares, and of our own danger?

Shall I tell you the truth, and the ſecret of this? It is with Chriſtians as it was with the Jews;—they were God's peculiar people;—they took no care to live like people ſo highly favoured;—God gave them up to their own ways, rejected them from being his people, and from being a nation.

Let us now look at home. People greatly value themſelves for being Chriſtians. And *becauſe Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners*,

ſinners, they depend upon that; not conſidering, that ſome ſinners will be ſaved, and others damned; which makes a very great difference.

They flatter themſelves, that their ſalvation is now in their own hands; and ſo live like thoſe that have no reaſon to fear, though they are in the midſt of ſnares.

They ſee others, even almoſt all about them, as little concerned as themſelves, without conſidering, that it will be little comfort to be undone with never ſo much company.

They will ſee no hurt in what Jeſus Chriſt has forbidden, for the very ſame reaſon that Eve had to eat the forbidden fruit, becauſe it pleaſes their ſenſes.

Have not Chriſtians ſome reaſon to fear ſome ſuch conſequence as the Jews experienced? It was what the Spirit of God has foretold:[d] *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy firſt works, or elſe I will remove thy candleſtick*; that is, unchurch thee.

This brings us, in the laſt place, to conſider how much every Chriſtian may contribute towards reſtoring Chriſtianity to its great deſign of *ſaving ſinners*, which was the great deſign *of Chriſt's coming into the world.*

And let us not, good Chriſtians, any of us, pervert, or make void, this deſign, by building our hopes of ſalvation upon any thing that is merely external; ſuch as, the bare name of Chriſtians, or an outward conformity to

[d] Rev. ii. 5.

to the uſages of the church we live in. Always remembering, that true religion cannot conſiſt in any thing which a wicked man can do as well as a good man.

We have ſeen how others have perverted the deſign of Chriſtianity, and brought many errors into the church. Would to God, this were only the crime of paſt ages, and that the preſent age were not concerned in it! But ſo it is, and ſo it will be, while Chriſtians will deſire to go to heaven without parting with their ſins;—they will ſeek out, and depend upon, expedients and ways to make their minds eaſy, which will not profit them in the end.

He who came to ſave us, muſt ſave us after his own way, *by purifying us to himſelf a peculiar people*; that is, a people conſecrated to him after a peculiar manner, not only by outward ceremonies, (which was what the Jews and Heathens depended on for recommending them to God's favour) but by a change of mind and heart. For if we are not very much changed for the better,—if we are not reſtored to the image of God, in which we were created,—we can never be ſaved. *Without holineſs*, without an holy temper and holy diſpoſitions, *no man muſt ſee the Lord.*

We muſt not only abſtain from ſin, and do what cuſtom, or intereſt, or human laws, may lead us to; but the love of God muſt be the governing principle of our lives. And this muſt

muſt appear in our being *zealous of good works*, in order to pleaſe God, and in obedience to his commands.

People of reaſon and faith will conſider, that the Chriſtian religion, its hopes and fears, its promiſes and threatenings, do not depend upon the opinion of men, but are as true, as certain, and as unalterable, as God himſelf. So that ſuch as live without religion muſt die without hopes of mercy.

This ſhould, one would think, awaken Chriſtians into a better ſenſe of their duty.

We are aſtoniſhed to hear a profane man deny the truths of the goſpel; and yet it is in the end the ſame thing, whether a man denies them, or does not conſider them, and live according to them. Both the one and the other muſt periſh.

That we may avoid this ſaid choice, and not make void our Redeemer's merciful deſign to ſave us; may I, and every one who now hears me, ſeriouſly think of it, *that now is the only time in which we are to chooſe where we muſt be for ever*; whether in a place of happineſs or miſery.

Let us endeavour to poſſeſs our hearts continually with the belief, the poſſibility, the certainty, (if it be not our own fault) of being ſaved,—of being ſaved and happy for ever.

For conſidering what God has done for us, in ſending his Son into the world, it is plain, that

that he desires our salvation more than we ourselves do.

And let us not despair of succeeding. The grace and spirit of God will enable us to overcome all difficulties;—his grace may be had for asking;—the most unlearned, who is sensible of his own wants, can ask so as to be heard.

Let no Christian therefore say, as Christ's disciple once did, *who can be saved?* Every Christian, every sinner, every man, to whom this word of salvation is preached, may be saved, if he will strive to work out his salvation with a concern answerable to what he is to gain or lose by it.

The misery of it is, Christians are apt to say, *who can be saved?* and yet live as if it were the easiest thing in the world, as if there were no manner of hazard, as if every body would be saved of course. This shews the corruption of our nature with a witness; and this corrupt nature must be mended, as ever we hope to be saved.

Indeed, we are all sinners. But our greatest danger does not lie in that, because we have a certain remedy at hand; but our great danger lies in our not sufficiently considering the danger of sin, and in our rejecting the only remedy;—in not considering, that this life is given, and continued to us, for no other end, but that we may every one of us work out our own salvation.

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For this life is indeed *a ſtate of trial*; and it concerns every one of us, as much as his ſoul is worth, to take care how he ſpends this ſhort life; foraſmuch as God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, when every man will receive a ſentence according to his works done in the body, that is, in this life. By which ſentence, *they that have done good*, who have been zealous of good works, *ſhall go into life everlaſting*; *and they that have done evil*, and have not repented of the evil they have done, *ſhall go into everlaſting fire*.

Dreadful ſentence indeed to all ſuch as will not cloſe with the ſalvation offered them by Jeſus Chriſt; who will not conſider and take pains, and do good now, that they may eſcape the bitter pains of eternal death!

But a comfortable ſentence to ſuch whoſe life is full of good works—who try and judge themſelves now—and who endeavour to prevent the judgment of God by a ſincere repentance.

And now, good Chriſtians, what can I add more, than to exhort and to beſeech you, that you take care, *that no ſeducing ſpirit beguile you of your reward*, by leading you into error. That no profane perſon, or inſtrument of that ſeducing ſpirit, of which there are but too many amongſt us, do weaken your faith, or laugh you out of your hopes of heaven. That no looſe and debauched perſons, who are ſlaves

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of that evil ſpirit, do by their peſtilent examples make you as wicked as themſelves, and fit only for the ſociety of devils when you die. And laſtly, that your own corrupt hearts do not betray you into an indifference for your ſouls, and for the things that concern your eternal welfare.

And may the bleſſed Jeſus Chriſt, *who came into the world to ſave ſinners*, may he enable all of us ſo to live, that when we come to die we may be numbered with his ſaints in glory everlaſting. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XIX.

ALL PLEAS AND EXCUSES FOR LIVING IN IGNORANCE AND SIN MADE VOID BY GOD, IN MAKING HIS WILL AND PURPOSES KNOWN IN THE GOSPEL.

JOHN XV. 22.

BUT NOW THEY HAVE NO CLOAK [*NO EXCUSE*] FOR THEIR SIN.

IT is moſt natural for people, when they have done amiſs, to lay the blame any where but on themſelves; and it is as natural, when they would follow their inclinations againſt their conſcience, to hope, that God will accept of what excuſe they can make.

Our firſt parents did ſo. The man blamed the woman;—the woman blamed the ſerpent; when the fault was plainly in themſelves: and accordingly they were both puniſhed, notwithſtanding their apology.

It was juſt ſo with the people of the Jews. They had impatiently expected the Meſſiah, whom God had promiſed by his prophets from the beginning of the world. When the Meſſiah came, they utterly rejected him, though he had moſt undeniable proofs of his being

being *ſent from God*; particularly his *doctrine*, which was moſt worthy of God; and his miracles, which were ſuch as none other ever had done. To theſe Jeſus Chriſt appeals, and declares, that after this *they had no cloak for their ſin*. That ſuch as ſhould reject him, and the gracious meſſage he brought them from God, whatever they had to ſay for themſelves, they would be puniſhed as moſt wicked oppoſers of God's good-will towards them.

Now; as inexcuſable as theſe people were in denying their Lord and Saviour, notwithſtanding the abundant proofs of his authority, it will appear, that this is the very caſe of all ſuch Chriſtians *as profeſs to know God, but in works deny him*;—that men are as apt now as ever they were, and with as little reaſon, to offer excuſes for thoſe ſins which they commit againſt the light of nature and the laws of God:—But that this ſentence of Jeſus Chriſt, *they have now no cloak for their ſin*, is as righteous and true againſt us, if we obey not the goſpel, as ever it was againſt the Jews, who crucified the Son of God; and we ſhall as certainly be puniſhed (whatever we can ſay for ourſelves) as ever they were.

Now; that this may appear with all the plainneſs that a matter of this importance ſhould do, and may more ſenſibly affect all our hearts, I ſhall *firſt* lay before you ſuch *excuſes* as men are apt to offer for their living in ignorance and ſin: and then I ſhall endeavour

vour to ſatisfy you, that God has moſt effectually made void all *pretences* and *pleas* whatever, by making his will and purpoſes known to us, after ſo gracious and convincing a manner. And then it will appear, whether we can have *any cloak for ſin*,—any that can hide us from the wrath of God *revealed againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men.*

And firſt, I ſhall lay before you *ſuch pleas and excuſes as men uſually offer for their living in ignorance and ſin.*

It is certain, no man chooſes to live in ſin on purpoſe to diſpleaſe God. It is as ſure, that few people think they ſhall die in their ſins unrepented of, and that they ſhall have eternal torments for their portion. But here is the caſe:—We are but too apt, through the corruption of nature, to be very fond of many things, which God (knowing they would hurt us) has forbidden us upon pain of his everlaſting diſpleaſure. His everlaſting diſpleaſure we cannot think of without horror: neither can we, without ſome trouble and pains, deny ourſelves, or do what God has commanded us.

We have therefore found out ſome excuſes, which for the preſent ſerve to make our minds eaſy, though we live in a careleſs neglect of God's commands, and conſequently of our own ſalvation.

For example:

1ſt. There are people who think, that if they have not *faith*, it is for want of ſufficient

evidence; and that they are not bound to obey the goſpel, till they confeſs they have reaſon to do ſo.

2dly. There are others who excuſe themſelves upon the account of *worldly buſineſs*, which takes up moſt of their thoughts and time.

3dly. There are very many who doubt not but that their *want of capacity* to know their duty will excuſe their not doing it.

4thly. It is often ſaid, that *temptations* are ſo many, and the *difficulties* of religion ſo great, that an allowance muſt be made, or few would be ſaved.

Laſtly. If no other excuſe will do, people are moſt apt to ſhelter themſelves under the *mercy of God*, and hope (through his goodneſs) all will be well with them at laſt.

Now; it is moſt certain, that none of theſe (and theſe are the moſt common excuſes) will ſave us from the wrath of God, *if we obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

I. And firſt, they that would make *the want of faith a cloak for their diſobedience*, are either ſuch as pretend they want evidence to convince them of the truth of the goſpel; or they are ſuch as complain they want a degree of faith ſufficient to incline their hearts to obedience.

The firſt are ſuch as are by Jeſus Chriſt himſelf condemned in this place. They would not, and they pretended they could not, believe *that he was ſent from God*; they deſpiſed his

his *meſſage*; they would not receive his *doctrine*; they gave no heed to his *miracles*; nor would they have patience, or be at the pains, to ſee whether this was *he whom the prophets did ſay ſhould come*. In ſhort, they could not ſay what would convince them, if neither a *doctrine* worthy of God, nor *works* which none but God *could* do, were not ſufficient. Jeſus Chriſt therefore, without giving them more proofs, or the ſign they demanded, poſitively pronounces their judgment in theſe words, *now they have no cloak for their ſin*.

And truly, it is to little purpoſe to argue with unbelievers of this ſort, where the fault is not the want of evidence, but the want of an heart diſpoſed to receive it. And therefore the Spirit of God is never ſolicitous to prove ſuch things as all people ought to know, and may know, if it is not their own fault. Thus Moſes begins the hiſtory of the creation: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth:* ſuppoſing, moſt truly, that he who has his eyes open, and does not, from the greatneſs and beauty of the creatures, acknowledge the Maker of them, all the arguments in the world will not convince him. And the apoſtle ſaith expreſsly, *all ſuch are without excuſe*.[a]

Unbelievers therefore of this ſort we muſt leave (as our Saviour has done) to the judgment of God.

[a] Rom. ix. 20.

But then there are others, who hope they may with more reaſon plead their *want of faith*; that is, ſuch a lively faith as may oblige them, in good earneſt, to live as becometh the goſpel of Chriſt. Now; being told,[h] *that faith is the gift of God*, they are apt to conclude, if they have it not, it is not their own fault; and this is their cloak, this their excuſe. And indeed it will be a good excuſe, provided a man can honeſtly ſay, that he hath ſeriouſly conſidered the danger of living in diſobedience to God's commands;—that he hath heartily acknowledged, before God, his own inability to keep them without his grace;—that he has prayed for God's grace, and followed the motions of his Spirit, as far as he was able;—that he has at leaſt done what was in his own power, and kept out of the way of temptations;—that when he has done amiſs, he has been ſorry for it, begged God's pardon, and reſolved not to do ſo again. If a man cannot ſay this with truth, it is plain he is not in earneſt, and therefore want of grace will be no excuſe before God, who knows that this is the leaſt of his concern.

The word of truth ſaith, *Aſk, and ye ſhall have; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you.* We will do none of theſe, and yet we wonder that God does not give us a convincing witneſs of the truth in our hearts. In ſhort, we faintly wiſh, that God would *touch our hearts*, while we are in good earneſt

[h] Eph. ii. 8.

earneſt afraid leſt he ſhould do ſo, and force us to lead a new life.

While it is thus with us, it is no wonder that God does not more effectually *touch our hearts*. The wonder indeed is, that people ſhould ever hope that this will excuſe their diſobedience.

After all, we are too apt to think this, and believe that we are in no danger, becauſe we do not fear any; as if people could not harden their hearts, and be in danger, without perceiving it; when the whole Bible is a hiſtory of men ruining themſelves, without fear or wit, even after they had ſufficient warning of what would follow.

To give but one inſtance: The people of the Jews were forewarned by Chriſt, (whoſe miracles juſtified his authority) that their obſtinacy and wickedneſs would, in a ſhort time, bring ſuch a deſtruction upon their temple and city, *that there ſhould not be left one ſtone upon another*. Now were *they* any farther from this deſolation, or did God excuſe them, or defer his judgments, becauſe they did not fear this, or becauſe they would not believe Chriſt's words? The application is plain.

II. But if want of faith will not excuſe our *diſobedience*, we are apt to think that *worldly buſineſs will excuſe us from making the care of our ſouls the great concern of our lives*.

Our bleſſed Lord ſaith the direct contrary. He ſaith, for inſtance, that a man makes a very

very ill bargain for himſelf, *who gains the whole world, and loſeth his own ſoul.* To this, people think it is enough to ſay, It is a burthen laid upon us, *in the ſweat of thy face ſhalt thou eat bread:* we muſt live, and we muſt take care for thoſe that come after us. As if the wiſe and good God had made the difficulties of this life ſo great, that men cannot take due care of their bodies and ſouls too.

After all, it is a moſt plauſible pretence, and ſuch as we are moſt apt to think a good one; and therefore Jeſus Chriſt has uſed a great many arguments to hinder us from making the cares of this life a cloak for not minding the next. *Conſider the fowls of the air; conſider the lilies of the field;* your heavenly Father feeds and clothes the one and the other. *Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow;* leave that to heathens, who know not God; *but ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.*

Theſe arguments are ſo plain, and ſo full to the purpoſe, that there are few Chriſtians who do not believe it their duty to think of another world, and prepare for it.

But then we have another pretence for not doing it at preſent. When we have provided for ourſelves, for old age, and for our families; then we ſhall, by the grace of God, in good earneſt leave off all our evil ways, and become *new creatures.* But pray, what promiſe have

we

we that God will then give us his grace? Theſe are the words of the promiſe: *To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* Will not our converſion then be too difficult a work? Shall we not be more likely to deſpair than undertake it? We know what the ſcripture ſaith of ſuch a change:—*Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? then ſhall ye alſo, that are accuſtomed to do evil, learn to do well.*

In one word; induſtry in our ſeveral callings is a chriſtian duty; the care of our ſouls is a duty alſo, and much the more neceſſary. We may mind them both, if we pleaſe. And our fault is this: we are ſent a while into this world to fit us for a better, and inſtead of doing ſo, we reſolve to ſet up our reſt here, and ſcarce think of the other.

III. And now we come to thoſe who think that their *want of capacity to know their duty will excuſe their not doing it.*

There is nothing more common than for people to cry, what can be expected from the like of us?—We know no better:—*To whom much is given, from him much will be required*: But that is not our caſe; our talents are few, and our accounts are ſoon made up. And upon the ſtrength of this way of arguing, many people make themſelves tolerably eaſy.

Now; it is certainly true, the account we ſhall give will be according to the talents we have received. But then as, when we compare

pare ourſelves with others, we are apt to over-value ourſelves; ſo when we think of the account we muſt give, we are as apt to under-value what we have received.

Is it *knowledge* you want, and hope that that will excuſe you? Why, let me tell you, that the learnedſt man you know has juſt as much knowledge, and is juſt as much better for it, as he keeps more ſtrictly the commandments of God; which you may do (if it is not your own fault) as well as the moſt learned. Hear what Chriſt ſaith to this purpoſe,—*Whoſoever heareth my words, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wiſe man.* This is true wiſdom, all the reſt is folly, let a man be never ſo knowing in his own or other people's opinion.

But how ſhall we know what is expected from us? Why, juſt as you know any thing elſe, by enquiry, by conſideration, and by taking the advice and direction of thoſe whoſe buſineſs it is to inform you.

To be plain:—There is not one of thoſe ignorant people who hope their want of knowledge will help to excuſe them, but will give a very ſuitable anſwer when he is aſked any thing about his worldly concerns. He knows, for inſtance, very well the difference bextwixt an eſtate which he can leave to poſterity, and one which is at the will of another. If ſuch a man's eſtate is in danger, you will ſoon ſee how ſenſible he is, and that he will lay all buſineſs aſide to ſecure what he thinks

the

the main chance. He will conſider with himſelf, he will adviſe with others wiſer than himſelf, he will aſk to be informed, be impatient if he is put off, very thankful when he is told what he ought to do: he will do all this with ſerioufneſs and a concern anſwerable to what lies at ſtake.

Tell one of theſe ignorant people of a good bargain, which it is in his power to make for himſelf, you will ſoon ſee with what cheerfulneſs and good underſtanding he will go about it.

So for *caſes of conſcience.* Such people very well know, when they are wronged, what juſtice they ought to expect. They can tell other people their duty plain enough; and is it not mere perverſeneſs to pretend not to know their own?

But let people pretend what they pleaſe, every body knows what is meant by *adultery*, *drunkenneſs*, *perjury*, *lying*, *backbiting*, and ſuch like. Now; we have a plain declaration of God's will and purpoſe, concerning all ſuch as commit any of theſe ſins:[c] *Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God.*

Will people, after ſuch a plain declaration as this, live in any of theſe ſins, and hope that God expects no better of them? Verily even

[c] 1 Cor. vi. 9.

they,

they, who think that God has given them the pooreſt capacities, if one ſhould tell them that it is their duty to live as they generally do, would ſoon ſee the wickedneſs of ſuch a doctrine, and would profeſs that they know better things themſelves.

After all, it is a queſtion, whether the unlearned lie under greater difficulties than thoſe that are more knowing. The favours of God to men are more equal than is uſually thought of; and therefore, where he has given more ſlow capacities, he will (if they do not reſiſt his will) give more grace. *I thank thee, O Father,* (ſaith Jeſus Chriſt) *that thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes.*

Accordingly, as too many can make a ſhift to go to hell with a great deal of knowledge; ſo we find many poor people, and of low capacities, as conſcientious in their dealings, as true lovers of God, as fearful of offending him, as thankful for his favours, as careful of their ways, as thoſe that have a great deal more knowledge, and better opportunities of knowing their duty.

So that want of capacity (and in a Chriſtian country) will never be accepted as an excuſe for not keeping the commands of God; eſpecially when it is conſidered, they who know leaſt know enough to make them ſerious and careful of their ways; that they might know a great deal more than they commonly do; and

and that they ſeldom live up to that meaſure of knowledge which they have.

Such, therefore, as love darkneſs rather than light; ſuch as may know their duty, and will not; and ſuch as know their duty, and yet neglect it; are (without more words) *inexcuſable.*

IV. Another excuſe is, that the *temptations we meet with are ſo many, and the difficulties of an holy life ſo great, that an allowance muſt be made, or few can be ſaved.*

Well then—are they who make this excuſe, reſolved to take *the broad way?* You know there are but *two*; the *narrow*, which leadeth unto life; and the *broad*, which leadeth to deſtruction: ſo ſaith our Saviour expreſsly,[d] and tells us moreover, that they are but few, in compariſon, who take the narrow way, which leadeth unto life, becauſe it is unpleaſing to fleſh and blood; while the other, becauſe it is eaſy, is moſt choſen and thronged.

It is but too plain, that ſuch as make this excuſe are in that way which leadeth to deſtruction. The only queſtion is, whether they are reſolved to go on in it? Eſpecially when they conſider, that it certainly leadeth to that place, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

Is it for nothing that God has made this known to us? It is not that we may awake out of ſleep? That we may ſee the danger we

[d] Matth. vii. 13.

are

are in, and overcome all difficulties, for a few days, that we may eſcape being miſerable for ever? And that we may be encouraged to do ſo, the Spirit of God has aſſured us, that our reward ſhall be great hereafter, our comfort in the mean time ſuch as cannot be expreſſed, and that we ſhall have ſuch aſſiſtance as ſhall enable us to overcome all difficulties. We have therefore but this choice, either to follow our own inclinations for a while, and be miſerable for ever; or to obey the will of God, (though we meet with uneaſineſs) that we may obtain his favour, and be eternally happy. And it is mere folly to expect any other iſſue of our obedience or diſobedience. For thus God has dealt with men ſince the world began: ſuch as obeyed him with their whole hearts, found their advantage in it; and ſuch as followed their own wicked imaginations, were rejected of God, and delivered up to deſtruction.

Laſtly. When no other excuſe will do, *people are apt to ſhelter themſelves under the mercy of God, and hope through his infinite goodneſs all will be well with them at laſt, though they ſhould not do their beſt to pleaſe him.*

It is moſt certain, that Mercy of God in Jeſus Chriſt is the only hope of ſinful men; but then it is ſtrange preſumption to hope that, becauſe God is good, I may therefore be more bold to provoke him; eſpecially, after God has expreſsly declared how far and to whom

whom his mercy ſhall extend, who may and who muſt not depend upon it. In particular, he has declared, that to the *impenitent* and *unbelievers* no mercy ſhall be ſhewn, whatever they may hope for. And that we may not miſtake his meaning, he has plainly told us, *true penitents are ſuch as bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, and that *true faith is ſuch as purifieth the heart*.[e] So that if this word be the rule by which God will judge us, and by which we may judge whether we are out of danger or not, we ſee plainly, that the mercy of God will be of no advantage to us, while we knowingly tranſgreſs his laws.

Nay; that this may be *no cloak for our ſin*, the Spirit of God has told us with what contempt God will treat thoſe that, being often reproved, and called upon, do ſtill harden their hearts till affliction come upon them: *I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.*

And now you ſee how much people may be miſtaken;—how apt they are to deceive themſelves;—how raſh, and how preſumptuous, in concluding all may be well with them, without any warrant from God's word. And this ſhould make us more cautious of truſting to a *falſe peace*, a peace of mind without reaſon and without promiſe.

What I mean is this:—Let us carefully examine ourſelves, whether we do not depend

[e] 2 Pet. i. 2.

upon

upon ſome of theſe, or ſome ſuch like pretences, for our future happineſs? always remembering, *that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* That the duties of Chriſtianity are indiſpenſable. That God did never excuſe any one of his ſervants, from the beginning of the world to this day, from *obſerving* them faithfully. *That no man can ſerve two maſters*; ſo that it is in vain to call myſelf a ſervant of God, when I do not the things which he has commanded.

Let us conſider farther, that if we meet with temptations, it was deſigned we ſhould do ſo, that we might thereby be obliged to depend more entirely upon God. That if we are ſometimes at a loſs, it is ſo ordered, that we may look up to God for light and ſalvation. That *if we love darkneſs rather than light*, it is no wonder if we miſs our way, and are bewildered. That if we want hearts to ſet about the work of our ſalvation in good earneſt, it is becauſe we know in our conſciences, that we never ſincerely prayed to God to give us grace to do ſo. That if we are careleſs becauſe the reſt of the world are ſo, and hope to come off as well as others, it is becauſe we do not conſider, that it will be no comfort to be damned for company, no more than it would be pleaſure to be poor, or ſick, or tormented here, for company.

Let us conſider a little farther:—That want of time can be no excuſe in a Chriſtian country,

try, where one day in ſeven is ſet apart for this buſineſs and none elſe. That want of capacity cannot be pretended, when we underſtand things much more difficult to be known. That to put off the concern of our ſouls to the laſt, is plainly to value them leſs than any thing elſe. That to think ourſelves ſafe, becauſe we do not fear any danger, is to be ignorant of a great truth, which is, that people may be given over to *a reprobate mind*, that is, a mind void of judgment. Laſtly; that ſuch pretences as theſe will rather increaſe our guilt, than ſerve to obtain our pardon, when we appear before God. And the concluſion will be, that he who ſeeks out excuſes for not living as becomes the goſpel of Chriſt, is only contriving how to ſhut himſelf out of heaven.

In one word; a man that is heartily concerned for his ſalvation will aſk himſelf this one ſhort queſtion, *Why do I hope to be ſaved?* He that dares not do this, may depend upon it, *he is not in the way of ſalvation.* And he that is once fully perſuaded, that without a *ſincere repentance*, a *lively faith*, and an *unfeigned charity*, he cannot be ſaved, will never think of making excuſes to free himſelf from theſe duties, and the fruit of them—*holineſs of life.* For a man to be at eaſe upon any other account, or to hope that any thing in the world will atone for want of true piety, is to hope without reaſon and without ſcripture.

This

This is what was neceſſary to be ſaid, to keep us from falſe hopes, and an unſafe peace of conſcience; which that it may do, I commend it and you to the good bleſſing of God. And I beſeech you, my beloved, remember this one thing, *that all is vanity, beſides taking care of your ſouls.*

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XX.

THE CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE, AND THE NECESSITY OF A REDEEMER.

LUKE v. 5. *We have toiled all the Night, and have taken nothing.*

AND ſo we ſhall ever do, without thy grace and help, O Jeſus. Enable me, therefore, I beſeech Thee, to ſpeak to the hearts and to the capacities of thoſe that hear me. Let me learn, and be able, from the ſenſe of my own corruption and frailties, to pity ſuch as are ignorant of the danger they are in; to warn ſuch as are careleſs; and to comfort and direct ſuch as are weary with the burden of their ſins, and lead them to Thee, their Redeemer; for thy merits' ſake, O Bleſſed Saviour. Amen.

ROMANS vii. 24, 25.

O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM! WHO SHALL DELIVER ME FROM THE BODY OF THIS DEATH? *WHY*; THE GRACE OF GOD, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.[a]

THE meaning of theſe words will be fully underſtood, if we look back to ſome verſes going before; particularly to verſe 18: *I know*, (that is, I feel by ſad experience) *that in me* (that is, in my fleſh) *dwelleth no good*

[a] See Pſalm lxxxv. 9. Baruch iv. 4. John iii. 16, and xv. 4. Acts iv. 12; xiii. 26. Rom. iii. 23; v. 8; vii. 18, &c. Gal. iii. 13. Eph. ii. 4. 1 Tim. i. 15. 1 John iv. 16.

thing: for to will that which is good, *is preſent with me*; that is, I eaſily perceive it; *but how to perform that which is good, I find not*; that is, of myſelf I am not able to do it.

Now, it being thus with me, *the good that I would*, (that which my reaſon approves) *this I do not*; *but the evil which I would not*, (which my conſcience tells me I ought not to do) *this I do*. This troubles me, grieves me, and makes me afraid for myſelf, and even forces me to cry out, *O wretched man that I am! who ſhall deliver me from this body of death?* (who ſhall free me from theſe bodily appetites, which enſlave me, and expoſe me to ruin?) *who ſhall deliver me?* why; THE GRACE OF GOD, (vouchſafed unto mankind) THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD; this will deliver every man, who ſincerely lays hold of it, from the ſlavery of thoſe ſins which do ſo eaſily beſet us.

Now I ſhall take occaſion, from theſe words, to lay before you,

Firſt; the great corruption of human nature.

2*dly*. The great danger we are in on that account.

3*dly*. This will ſhew the neceſſity and bleſſing of a Redeemer.

4*thly*. We ſhall then ſee plainly the great love of God in ſending his Son to redeem us.

5*thly*. We ſhall conſider the great obligations this love of God lays upon Chriſtians.

And,

And, *laſtly*, The dreadful condition of all ſuch as neglect or deſpiſe this great mercy of God vouchſafed to men.

Believe it, Chriſtians, that what I am going to ſay to you upon theſe heads will be worthy of your moſt ſerious attention. They are truths on which our ſalvation depends, and therefore I would preſs them upon your hearts with all imaginable plainneſs, as well as earneſtneſs.

I. Let us firſt conſider *the great corruption of our nature*; the knowledge of this being the foundation of all true religion. *They that be whole* (ſaith our Redeemer) *need not a phyſician, but they that are ſick:* theſe, and theſe only, will deſire and value the help that is offered them. Jeſus Chriſt, (ſaith the prophet Iſaiah, lxi. 1) when he cometh, *will preach glad tidings*—but to whom? why, *to the meek*; for ſuch only would be diſpoſed to receive his meſſage: *He would bind up the broken-hearted*, for ſuch only would be glad of help: *He would proclaim liberty to the captives*, for ſuch only as are ſenſible of the bondage of ſin will be glad to be ſet at liberty.

It was ſuch as theſe that our Lord invited, when he ſaid, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden* with the burden of your ſins, *and I will give you reſt.*

In ſhort; wherever the goſpel was preached, all ſuch as feared God, and were in fear for themſelves, when they were told of a judgment

to come; theſe received the goſpel with a glad heart, as ſhewing them the way to obtain pardon and happineſs. Whilſt *all the proud*, as the ſame prophet ſpeaks, *and ſuch as do wickedly, fearing no evil*, to ſuch the goſpel would be preached without effect.

Now; my deſign, in the firſt place, is, to raiſe in your hearts the ſame concern and fear which the apoſtle ſuppoſeth every man will have, who ſets himſelf ſeriouſly to conſider his condition by nature, and without a Redeemer.

Our firſt parents were moſt certainly created innocent and upright, able and diſpoſed to obey any command that God ſhould think good to give them.

We are very ſure it is not ſo with us now. Every one for himſelf knows, that matters are wretchedly amiſs with us, until by the grace of God our nature is changed for the better. Whoever will be at the pains to look into his own heart, will find this corruption of nature diſcovering itſelf upon all occaſions. For inſtance: we readily acknowledge the juſtice of the laws of God, and yet we find an unwillingneſs in ourſelves to obey them. We know that we want both knowledge, and grace, and help, from God, and yet we aſk them but ſeldom, and with indifference. We cannot but own, that we live upon God's bounty and bleſſing, and yet we can hardly find in our hearts to be thankful. We profeſs to believe, that God ſees all our actions, and yet we

are too apt to ſin as preſumptuouſly as if he were an idol, who could neither reward nor puniſh us. In one word: we hear what he has threatened without fear, and ſee his judgments upon others, without ſo much as thinking how ſoon it may be our own caſe.

Theſe are deſperate diſorders, whatever people think of them. But theſe are not all the proofs of a corrupt nature. We are forced to ſtruggle hard with ourſelves to do what we know to be not only our *duty*, but our *intereſt* to do. The Lord our Maker, we confeſs, has a right to be loved, to be feared, to be depended upon. Can we ſay with any truth that we are naturally diſpoſed to love, to fear, and to put our whole truſt in him? Do we not find in ourſelves too great an indifference for the glorious promiſes God has made us; and do not we diſcover a very little fear for his terrible threatenings?

Our own experience may convince us, that we are apt to have a much greater concern for our bodies than for our ſouls; for this life, than for that which is to come; for earth, than for heaven.

If our reaſon does ſometimes get the better of our corrupt affections, and we reſolve to do what we believe will pleaſe God, yet how ſoon do we forget our good reſolutions! One day condemning ourſelves for having done amiſs; and the next day running into the ſame miſcarriages, and falling into the ſins we ſo lately repented of. If

If we look into the world, we ſee nothing, in a manner, but ſin and diſorder. We ſee too many who live without God in the world, committing all iniquity with greedineſs; upon whom no reaſon, no arguments, will prevail, to hinder them from ruining themſelves to all eternity.

Even amongſt thoſe who pretend to live in the fear of God, how many do we ſee, upon whom his laws have little or no influence! Do not we ſee, for example, that many—too many—muſt be forced by human laws, and the puniſhments that attend them, to do what they know in their conſciences they ought to do; to do juſtice to their neighbour; to make ſatisfaction to thoſe that they have wronged?

How many are there, who make a *mock* of ſin, though they know that it muſt be moſt diſpleaſing to God; and make a jeſt of damnation, which ought to make the ſtouteſt heart to tremble; who are not content to be wicked themſelves, but take pains to corrupt others! And (without giving any more proofs of the corruption of nature) do not too, too many live, as if they did not believe there is a God, either to reward or puniſh them?

All theſe pretend to reaſon; and indeed God has given all men reaſon. But luſts and paſſions will corrupt and blind our reaſon; what then would become of the wiſeſt of men, if God did not help us by his Spirit and by his grace?

You

You ſee, Chriſtians, what we are by nature, what men are capable of, what they *would* be, when God leaves them to themſelves, and to their own natural corruption. You ſhall now ſee,

II. *The very great danger we are in on that account*, if God ſhould leave us to ourſelves, and to our own natural powers.

When one looks into the world, and ſees the generality of people without any concern and fear for themſelves, and for what may come hereafter, one cannot but conclude, *ſurely they do not know the danger they are in.*

This is indeed the root of all our miſery. We are in the way of ruin, and do not mind it. We are afraid of laying things to heart, leſt they ſhould make us uneaſy; and our misfortune is, that we are not (the generality of Chriſtians) ſo uneaſy as we ſhould be.

For who can, who ought, to be eaſy, that knows, that conſiders, the danger to which his corrupt nature expoſes him? For as ſuch, in the firſt place, he is under the diſpleaſure of God, and, without God's help and grace, he muſt continue ſo unto his life's end; foraſmuch as no man can change, can mend a corrupt nature, by a reaſon and will that are both corrupt.

Now God can take no pleaſure in any man, until his nature be mended; till then he is an enemy to God, and under the government of Satan. This we learn from the commiſſion which

which the apoſtles had from Chriſt himſelf,[b] which was, *To preach the goſpel to the heathens, in order to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.*

What the power of Satan is, we learn from many inſtances of ſcripture; and we ſee with our own eyes the ſad effects of his power upon thoſe who are under his government, *and who are led captive by him at his will.*

In ſhort; theſe are the evils which, as fallen creatures, we are, every ſoul of us, ſubject to: A corrupt heart; the malice and power of wicked ſpirits; a proneneſs to evil continually; the temptations of an evil world; a weakneſs of nature which cannot withſtand them; a certain proſpect of death; the fears of a judgment to come; the continual dread of the ſentence then to be paſſed upon ſinners; and, laſtly, the aſſurance that we cannot poſſibly deliver ourſelves out of this ſad condition.

The thoughts of theſe things are enough to make the ſtouteſt heart to tremble, and to diſtract the wiſeſt man living, if the God of mercy had not propoſed a way to deliver us out of the dangers that threaten us.

Theſe dangers I have ſet before you—not to drive you to deſpair, but—to awaken us all into a juſt ſenſe of the unhappy ſtate we are in without the bleſſing of a Redeemer.

III. *The neceſſity and bleſſing of a Redeemer,* we now come to conſider.

[b] Acts xxvi. 18.

Now;

Now; every thoughtful perſon may be convinced, that as fallen creatures we muſt have forfeited all the favours which God deſigned us at our creation. That we loſt that Holy Spirit by which our ſouls were united to God, and by which we had power to know and to do whatever God ſhould require of us. That by the loſs of that Holy Spirit, our reaſon became inſufficient to guide us; our will and our affections became ungovernable, ſo that of courſe we became ſubject to all manner of wickedneſs. That, while this was our condition, God could take no pleaſure in us, and we had nothing to expect but the puniſhment due to our offences. And laſtly, that we could not, by any thing we could do, help ourſelves out of this ſad condition.

Now, does not all this ſhew us the abſolute neceſſity of a Redeemer;—of one, who could undertake to make ſatisfaction for our offences to the Divine Juſtice;—of one, who could plead with God for his loſt creatures, who could prevail with him to forgive us, and to receive us again into his favour?

Who does not ſee the neceſſity of ſome one, who could let us know upon what terms God would forgive us; who could ſhew us the way and means of ſalvation; who could give us that Holy Spirit which we had loſt, to help us to regain our former happy ſtate; of one, who could help us to ſubdue all our enemies ſpiritual and temporal; who could ſet us an example

example how we ought to live ſo as to pleaſe God; and laſtly, one who ſhould be able to deliver us from the wrath to come?

Now all this our Redeemer, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, has done for us. He has given us the greateſt aſſurance that, for his ſake, God will be reconciled to us; that he will accept of our repentance when we have done amiſs; that he will treat us, as he would have done our firſt parents, had they not ſo grievouſly offended him, if we will but be governed by him; that he will give us his Holy Spirit, to ſanctify and mend our corrupt nature; and, what is the moſt aſtoniſhing mercy, he has prevailed with God to make us everlaſtingly happy, if, during this ſhort life of trial, we will but do our beſt to fit ourſelves for that happy ſtate.

And laſtly, to magnify this bleſſing, every one, from the firſt man to the laſt that ſhall be born, may have an intereſt in this bleſſing, if he loſe it not by his own fault.

IV. Now let us conſider *the great love of God, in ſending his own Son to be our Redeemer.* —*God* (ſaith our Redeemer) *ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*[c]

That our hearts may be touched with a ſenſe of this mighty bleſſing, let us conſider ourſelves as poor, wretched, ſinful creatures, in the certain way to ruin, utterly unable to help

[c] John iii. 16.

help ourſelves. Then let us look unto God, who has millions of millions of creatures better than the beſt of us, who never offended him, always ready to ſerve and glorify him. What can we think could move this great God not to overlook this vile part of his creation, but to give his own Son for their redemption? Why, verily, this love of God paſſeth our comprehenſion; nor could we have believed it, had not this his Son laid down his life to aſſure us of his Father's love for his poor creatures.

This love of God, this tender concern for loſt mankind, will appear ſtill more ſurpriſing, when we conſider, that he made this his only Son to become ſubject to the law made for ſinners, and to all the miſeries and afflictions which ſinners deſerve and are ſubject to; to *poverty*, to *contempt*, to *ſorrow*, to *pain*, and to *death* after all, in order to deliver us from eternal death.

I know there can be no caſe on earth to be compared to this Love of God, in order to raiſe our value for ſo great a bleſſing.

However, let us imagine, how we ſhould value one who had delivered us out of a curſed ſlavery, had paid our ranſom; or one who had hazarded his own life, to ſave any one of us from certain death? And has not our gracious God done this, and much more than this, for us? But how few are affected, as they ought

ought to be, with this amazing inſtance of love, mercy, and goodneſs!

I will but juſt hint to you ſome inſtances of his mercy in this diſpenſation, in which he has had a merciful regard to all our diſorders.

God knew that our reaſon, corrupted by our paſſions, was not able to lead us in the way we ſhould go; for as the Spirit of God[d] aſſures us, and we find it by ſad experience, *There is a way which ſeemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.* God has therefore given us ſafe and infallible rules to walk by, to lead us to heaven and happineſs. He knew how apt we are to go aſtray; he has therefore promiſed, for our Redeemer's ſake, to accept of our repentance. He knew the weakneſs of our nature, and the difficulties, and enemies, we had to ſtruggle with; he therefore offers us the aſſiſtance of his Almighty Spirit.

In ſhort: the greateſt ſinner may be ſure of pardon, if it is not purely his own fault; the weakeſt Chriſtian may depend upon all the aſſiſtance that he can poſſibly want; the meaneſt ſervant of Chriſt may be aſſured that he will not be overlooked; and every Chriſtian has a ſure promiſe that his labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord. This will lead us to another particular:

V. To conſider *what obligations this great love of God lays upon Chriſtians.*

[d] Prov. xiv. 12.

Do

Do not imagine, Chriſtians, that God intended that all this love ſhould be loſt upon us, or that he expects no other fruits of his Son's labours and ſufferings, beſides a bare profeſſion of gratitude. *Woe be to that man who acts as if he thinks ſo!*

We do indeed, in our daily devotions, give God thanks in a very particular manner *for his ineſtimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*,—a love which paſſeth all poſſible expreſſions and acknowledgment on our part. But what will this ſignify, if in our works we deny him; if in our lives we are like heathens, not knowing or not valuing the bleſſing of a Redeemer?

What then does God expect from us, on account of this mighty love? Why; that we ſhould act like reaſonable creatures, like people who know they are upon their trial, and that this is for eternity; who may be happy if it is not their own fault, and who will be miſerable beyond redemption, if they cloſe not with this offer of mercy.

God expects, therefore, that we ſhould glorify him in our lives for this his great goodneſs; that we ſhould convince the world that we do really believe the things we profeſs to believe, by working out our ſalvation with fear, with a concern anſwerable to what we hope for, or what we fear. He expects that we ſhould remember what manner of love he had for us, that we ſhould be called the Sons

of

of God. That we ſhould reſolve with thoſe mentioned in the Book of Wiſdom, [xv. 2] *We will not ſin, knowing that we are accounted thine.* That we ſhould not debaſe ourſelves, by becoming the ſervants of Satan, from whoſe dominion we have been redeemed by the precious blood of his dear Son; but ſhould let the love of God conſtrain us to ſhew our gratitude, by fruits worthy of ſo great a mercy; eſpecially in theſe dangerous days, wherein the name of Chriſt is blaſphemed, and his ſufferings not valued by unbelievers, occaſioned chiefly by the bad lives of Chriſtians; but then they are ſuch Chriſtians as are certain to be ſhut out of heaven, for being as bad as infidels.

There is one other obligation which the Spirit of God has laid upon all ſuch as value the bleſſing of a Redeemer: *If God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another.*[e] This is to be the motive and the pattern of our love for our neighbour. *This command we have from God, that he who loveth God, do love his neighbour alſo.*[f] This leads us to conſider in the laſt place,

VI. *The ſad condition of thoſe who neglect, or deſpiſe, this mercy of God.*

It is the Spirit of God who hath declared, *That there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved, but only the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*[g] So that whoever does not lay hold of this means of

[e] 1 John iv. 11. [f] 1 John iv. 21. [g] Acts iv. 12.

ſalvation,

ſalvation, muſt undoubtedly periſh to all eternity.

If you wonder how it is poſſible for any man who knows this to hazard his ſoul to all eternity, the apoſtle will give you the true reaſon:[h] *The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.*

Little do wicked men and unbelievers think, that *Satan, the God of this world*, is he who is perpetually ſuggeſting to them ſuch things as weaken and deſtroy their faith, ſuch pleaſures as blind their underſtandings, ſuch ways of living as lead them directly to hell. And yet it is certainly ſo; he hath blinded their eyes, ſo that they cannot ſee the conſequence of abuſed mercy, nor the ſad condition of *being given over to a reprobate mind*; though there is no condition more dreadful, than for a man to be ſubject to the juſtice of God, without any intereſt in his mercy. This made David, (though in the main a good man) this made him mourn ſo bitterly, when, through the corruption of his nature, he had grievouſly offended God: *I am ſore troubled; mine iniquities are an heavy burthen; I go mourning all the day long.* What a dreadful condition had he been in, even to eternity, had there been no ſacrifice for ſin? And, indeed, there was none under the law for ſuch ſins as his was, as he himſelf acknowledges; nor would his troubled ſpirit, his broken and contrite heart, have been accepted for his pardon, but only for

[h] 2 Cor. iv. 4.

for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, the Redeemer of all from the foundation of the world.

In one word: We may, if we will but conſider, we *may* judge how ſad our condition and danger is, without a Redeemer, by the way which God has made uſe of to ſave us from ruin. Nothing in the decrees of God, nothing could ſave us, but the ſending of his own Son to lay down his life for us.

I have ſet before you, Chriſtians, the great diſorders we are by nature ſubject to; the great hazard we are in on that account; the only ſure remedy we have to truſt to; the great goodneſs of God in pitying our ſad condition; what he requires in return for this mercy; and the ſad conſequence of not cloſing with his gracious deſigns for our good.

Great kindneſſes, or great judgments, are the uſual methods by which God reduces his poor wandering creatures. By which of theſe methods will you wiſh to be dealt with? I have ſet before you the greateſt inſtance of love, goodneſs, mercy, and kindneſs, that was ever ſhewed to men or angels. If this does not work upon you, and if ever you hope to be ſaved, you have nothing to look for, but to be reclaimed from the ways of ſin by ſevere judgments. But this is not what God delights in; he would have *his goodneſs*, and *that only*, to lead men to repentance.

Few people can be eaſy without ſomething which they call religion. For God's ſake remember

remember this truth: that no religion will be of uſe to us, which does not mend our corrupt nature, and by doing ſo reſtore us to the favour of God; which does not bring us to love him for his goodneſs to us, and to ſtrive to glorify him by leading a Chriſtian life; by an humble dependance on his providence, and ſubmiſſion to his will; and by doing good in our generation. Without this, all our religion is vain, and we ſhall ſtill be in the way of perdition.

Have a care, Chriſtians, of a deluſion which too many are in danger of being ruined by, by fancying that the corruption of their nature will be ſome excuſe for their unchriſtian lives. God commands us certain duties; he offers us all neceſſary aſſiſtance; he propoſes to reward us according to our ſincere endeavours to obey him. To ſay after this, *we are all ſinners, and who can help it?* without reſolving that moment to repent and amend, is an affront to our dear Redeemer, and a doing deſpite to the Spirit of Grace.

We are ready enough to own the bleſſing of a *redeemer*, when we only conſider Jeſus Chriſt as coming into the world to ſave ſinners; as being our *advocate with God* to accept of our repentance. But we ſhould always remember, that he is alſo our *lawgiver*, and that we muſt obey his laws, or he will be no bleſſing to us.

You ſee, therefore, to whom our Redeemer will be a bleſſing; even to ſuch as by a ſaving

faith, and a ſincere obedience, do ſuffer themſelves to be made partakers of a divine nature.

And now, before I conclude, I muſt adviſe you of two ways by which Satan will attempt to divert you from making a profitable uſe of ſuch doctrines as theſe; either he tempts Chriſtians to deſpair, and out of a deep ſenſe of their corruption to cry out, *O wretched creature that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the ſin that does beſet me?* Or he tempts them to believe, that ſince Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners, it is a very eaſy thing to be ſaved. Theſe are both of them very dangerous deluſions.

Jeſus Chriſt did indeed come into the world to ſave ſinners; but what ſort of ſinners? Why, ſuch as do forſake their ſins, and fully purpoſe to lead holy lives for the time to come. But as for ſuch as depend upon a bare outward performance of the duties of Chriſtianity; who comfort themſelves with being able to ſay, *We have eaten and drank at thy table, and we are called by thy name*; our Lord himſelf has declared what judgment he will paſs upon ſuch Chriſtians: *Depart from me; I know you not.*[i] A ſentence (believe it, Chriſtians!) that ſhould make the very beſt of us examine, whether our lives and our works do anſwer our outward profeſſion.

As for ſuch ſinners as are truly afraid for themſelves; who ſincerely lament the corruption of their nature, and out of an earneſt de-

[i] Luke xiii. 27.

ſire

ſire to pleaſe God cry out, *who ſhall deliver me from this body of death?* let ſuch always remember what follows, *I thank God, through Jeſus Chriſt*; that is, for his ſake, God will deliver me from the evil effects of the corruption of my nature, from the power of the devil, and from eternal death.

If it be ſo, you will be apt to aſk, Why then are there few that be ſaved? The caſe is ſad, but plain: people will not fear for themſelves; they will not part with their ſins, nor lay hold of the mercy offered them.

But may every ſinner (ſays the deſponding Chriſtian) be confident, that God will pardon thoſe who have ſo many ways offended him? Take an anſwer—not from me, but—from the Son of God himſelf, who has declared even with an oath, *Verily, all ſins ſhall be forgiven unto the ſons of men.*[k]

Why ſhould any, the moſt fearful, Chriſtian imagine, that that divine ſhepherd, who with ſo much love and pains came to ſeek his loſt ſheep, that he will turn his back upon one that cries after him for help; that he would lay down his life for his ſheep, and after that reject them. Let not the moſt diſconſolate Chriſtian entertain ſuch unkind thoughts of God, and of our good Redeemer. Rather let us comfort ourſelves, under the moſt deſponding thoughts, with the argument of the apoſtle:[l] *If, when we were ſinners and*

[k] Mark iii. 28. [l] Rom. v. 10.

enemies to God, we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by him; for he ever liveth to make interceſſion for us.

And now, let me leave this one truth upon your minds; it is a truth as certain as that this [the bible] is the word of God—That unleſs our corrupt nature be mended before we die, we ſhall never go to heaven, never be happy.

May the good Spirit of God fix theſe truths in all our hearts, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake!

To whom, with the Father and that Holy Spirit, be aſcribed all honour and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XXI.

ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

THE NATURE, THE POWER, AND THE MALICE OF EVIL SPIRITS; AND THE NECESSITY OF A STEDFAST FAITH IN THE PROTECTION OF GOD.

MARK V. 13.

AND FORTHWITH JESUS GAVE THEM LEAVE. AND THE UNCLEAN SPIRITS WENT OUT, AND ENTERED INTO THE SWINE: AND THE HERD RAN VIOLENTLY DOWN A STEEP PLACE INTO THE SEA, (THEY WERE ABOUT TWO THOUSAND) AND WERE CHOAKED IN THE SEA.[a]

THE church has appointed *this feſtival*, that we may not forget that there are *other beings*, beſides thoſe we every day ſee and converſe with, with which we are greatly concerned; the word of God aſſuring us, that both *good and bad angels* are appointed or permitted by God, the one to ſuccour and defend us, the other to hurt and ruin us whenever we take ourſelves from under his protection.

Sometimes we are apt to aſcribe too much power to evil ſpirits, and to be too much afraid of thoſe whom we ſuſpect to have dealings with them. And ſometimes we deſpiſe them

[a] See Ecclus. xxxix. 28. Luke x. 17. John xiii. 27. 2 Cor. ii. 10. Epheſ. ii. 2. James iv. 7. Rev. xii. 12.

and

and their power, as if we had nothing to fear from them. We are in the wrong in both theſe extremes.

The hiſtory which I am going to explain to you will give us a better account of theſe matters. It is mentioned by three of the Evangeliſts, as a ſubject which the Chriſtian world ought to be well acquainted with; ſo that you may be ſure it is your duty to know and underſtand what God has revealed to us concerning the nature, the power, the number, and the malice, of thoſe evil ſpirits that are about us, and how we may be ſecure from any evil they can do to us.——The hiſtory is this:

There met Jeſus a man poſſeſſed with a legion of devils. His condition was very miſerable; he was night and day in the mountains and in the tombs, crying and cutting himſelf with ſtones; he had been often bound with fetters and chains, but to no purpoſe; he plucked them aſunder, neither could any man tame him. Jeſus, ſeeing him in this condition, had compaſſion on him, and commanded the evil ſpirits to leave him. They knew they muſt obey, but they beſought him that they might go into an herd of ſwine, that were feeding hard by; the very nature of them being to do miſchief whenever they are permitted. Jeſus, that he might convince the world how dreadful their malice is, and how great their power, when left to themſelves, and not

reſtrained

reſtrained by God, therefore gave them leave: *and behold, the whold herd of ſwine ran violently down a ſteep place into the ſea, and periſhed in the waters.* And that very legion of evil ſpirits, which juſt before could not deſtroy one poor man, (their power being limited by God) can now deſtroy with eaſe two thouſand other creatures, having obtained leave ſo to do.

When Jeſus was about to leave this place, he that had been poſſeſſed with the devils beſought him that he might be with him; fearing, very probably, that the devils and his diſorders might return, when once his deliverer ſhould be gone and at a diſtance from him; but Jeſus ſuffered him not to go with him, but bade him go home to his friends, and tell them how great things the Lord had done for him. From which he would have us to learn, that the eyes of the Lord are in every place, and that his providence is ſufficient ſecurity againſt all attempts of the devil, provided we are but in the way of our duty.

Now; from this hiſtory we learn three truths of great importance.

1*ſt*. That the devil is a ſpirit of great malice, and great power.

2*dly*. That both his malice and power are altogether under the government of God.

And 3*dly*. That God often permits him to do great miſchief for the puniſhment of wicked men, and for the trial of the faith of good men.

I. And

I. And firſt; *That the devil is a ſpirit of great power and malice*, is made known to us as often almoſt as he is ſpoken of in the holy ſcriptures. St. Paul[b] expreſſes his power after this manner: *We wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood*, that is, againſt men like ourſelves, *but againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world*, againſt *wicked ſpirits*, who endeavour all that is poſſible to make men as wicked as themſelves. And St. Peter[c] likens him to *a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour*, that is, whom he may be permitted to deſtroy. *He was a murderer from the beginning*, ſaith our Lord, John viii. 44. And Rev. xii. 9, he is ſaid *to deceive the whole world.*

And, becauſe we are more affected with what we ſee or hear to be done by him, this hiſtory is recorded, that we may not want ſufficient evidence of what he can do.

Having got poſſeſſion of the poor man, *he had no longer reſt.* Being forced by the command of Chriſt to leave this habitation, his malice went as far as he knew it would be ſuffered to go; for getting poſſeſſion of the ſwine, they were immediately every one deſtroyed.

Now; this miracle being the only one of all that Jeſus wrought, which brought any thing that looked like an injury to any man, we may be ſure it was permitted, in order to fix a laſting impreſſion and remembrance upon all that ſhould hear of it, what great power

[b] Epheſ. vi. 12. [c] Chap. v. 8. the

the devil has when he is let looſe to do what he pleaſes. And it was well even for theſe very people who loſt their goods, that they knew the power of evil ſpirits by ſuch a judgment as this. For the devil could as eaſily have deſtroyed two thouſand of *them*, as two thouſand of their ſwine, had God permitted him to have uſed his power.

II. *For being entirely under the government of God, he can do nothing without God's permiſſion.*

The text ſaith, *Jeſus gave them leave*, to aſſure us, that without his leave they had no power. And in the book and hiſtory of Job, it is revealed to us, that the evil ſpirit has no power to exerciſe his malice but when he hath expreſs leave from God: *Haſt not thou made a fence about him, and about all that he hath?*[c] This that the devil complained of was Job's ſecurity; but when God gave the word, *Behold, all that he has is in thy power*;[d] we ſee what ſhort work the devil made of all that the world calls happineſs. He left him neither eſtate, nor child, nor health, nor friend, except God only; in whoſe providence, notwithſtanding his ſevere afflictions, he continued to put his truſt, and in the end it turned to account, and for his good.

And our Lord told St. Peter, *Behold, Satan has deſired to have you, that he may ſift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*;[e]—that God would deliver thee from

[c] Job i. 10. [d] Job i. 12. [e] Luke xxii. 31,

that

that great trial and temptation; and accordingly he was delivered by the grace of God; though God ſuffered Satan to proceed ſo far as to make St. Peter to deny his Lord againſt his moſt ſolemn promiſes and reſolutions. But then this was to ſhew us two things; *firſt*, what poor weak creatures we are when left to ourſelves, and to Satan to govern us; and *ſecondly*, that the devil's malice is reſtrained by God, who permits him to make uſe of juſt ſo much malice as will anſwer God's ends, and ſerve his glory.

III. *That God permits the devil to make uſe of both his malice and power, for the trial of good men, and for the puniſhment of the wicked,* is what we now come to conſider, and to prove by the word of God.

And in the firſt place, this is what the Spirit of God foretold the church of Smyrna:[f] *Fear none of thoſe things which thou ſhalt ſuffer. Behold, the devil will caſt ſome of you into priſon, that ye may be tried. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

This was the caſe of Job, and this was the great miſtake of his friends, who thought that puniſhment was always for the faults of him that ſuffered. And yet our bleſſed Saviour, by the decree of God, was to be the moſt afflicted, while he was the moſt innocent of men. And his apoſtle St. Paul had a meſſenger of Satan, that is, a diſeaſe, by God's permiſſion, inflicted on him by Satan, to prevent

[f] Rev. ii. 10.

vent that pride which otherwiſe would have ruined him.[g]

In all theſe caſes, good men have a ſure promiſe to ſupport their ſpirits: *God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it.*[h]

But then this is not always the deſign of God's permitting the devil to have his liberty; it is very often to puniſh the wicked, that he takes off his reſtraining power. *He caſt upon ſinners* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt[i]) *the fierceneſs of his anger, by ſending evil angels among them.* And God had no ſooner decreed to deſtroy Ahab for his wickedneſs, but an evil ſpirit forthwith undertakes to bring him to deſtruction,[k] by becoming a lying ſpirit in the mouth of all his prophets, whoſe advice he followed to his ruin.

By this time you will perceive, good Chriſtians, that God has mercifully provided for our inſtruction, in preſerving this hiſtory in all its particulars for the uſe of his church. Here is the great power and malice of the devil. Here is the providence of God reſtraining and limiting him, how far he ſhall go, and no farther. Here is God's ſovereignty over all creatures, let who will be the owners of them. Laſtly; here is the miſerable ſtate of thoſe that are under the power of the devil,

[g] 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8. [h] 1 Cor. x. 13.
[i] Pſal. lxxviii. 49. [k] 1 Kings xxii. 21.

and

and are led captive by him at his will. All theſe things are ſet forth in this hiſtory, ſo as to affect our minds after the moſt ſenſible manner.

You cannot think that this hiſtory was recorded by *three* Evangeliſts, only to entertain our curioſity, only to be read and forgot, and the thoughts of it laid aſide. Pray then, let us conſider the uſe we ought to make of what at preſent you have heard.

And firſt, the power of Evil Spirits is made known to us, in order to make us more careful of our ways, leſt they get an advantage over us. *Be ſober, be vigilant*, (ſaith the apoſtle[l]) *becauſe your adverſary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour.* If people will live as if they had no enemies, notwithſtanding the warning God has given them, their ruin is plainly of themſelves.

We have need, you ſee, to mind the apoſtle's directions, *To put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil.*[m] Particularly, *a ſtedfaſt faith in the power of God*, which will oblige us to depend upon him as a child upon his father, and not ſuffer us to doubt either his good-will, or his readineſs to ſuccour us.

The text ſaith, *Jeſus gave them leave.* You ſee then that without God's leave they cannot hurt the meaneſt of his creatures. How careful then ſhould we all be to put ourſelves,

[l] 1 Pet. v. 8. [m] Eph. vi. 12.

and

and all that belong to us, under God's protection every day of our lives; how eaſy and ſecure when we have done ſo! Being well aſſured, that it is not in the power of the devil, or his agents, to go any farther than God permits them.

You ſee, thirdly, how careful we ſhould be *not to grieve the Holy Spirit, by which we are ſealed unto the day of redemption.* For when the Spirit of God forſakes us, there are other ſpirits very ready to take the government of us. It is ſaid of Saul, that when *the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, an evil ſpirit from the Lord troubled him*;[n] and it may be as truly ſaid of all wicked men, that when they forſake God, God will forſake them, and then they are under the power of the devil.

And indeed all the world are under the government of God and his good angels, or under the direction of Satan and his evil ſpirits; and therefore, before we are received into the church of Chriſt, we do ſolemnly renounce the devil at our baptiſm; by which ſacrament we are put under the immediate government of God and his good angels, who are by God appointed to miniſter unto them that are heirs of ſalvation.[o] Now, if we force theſe good angels to forſake their charge, there are others always ready to take us again into their power.

And here I ſhall take occaſion to explain the meaning of two paſſages in the New Teſtament, and of ſpeaking upon a ſubject which

[n] 1 Sam. xvi. 14. [o] Heb. i. 14. is

is not ſo well underſtood by Chriſtians as it ought to be. The paſſages I mean are, 1 Tim. i. 20, and 1 Cor. v. 5; in both which places we have mention made of *delivering wicked men to Satan.*

Now, becauſe this is laughed at by profane people, who do not know the Scriptures, I will ſhew you what this means.

The Spirit of God then tells us, that the devil hath a kingdom and ſubjects, over which he reigns; that is, *over the children of diſobedience:* And that Jeſus Chriſt has alſo his kingdom and ſubjects, *even all that obey his laws.* And therefore, when the apoſtles and miniſters of Chriſt gained any of the ſubjects of Satan unto Chriſt, they are ſaid in ſcripture, *to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.*

Now when any of Chriſt's ſubjects ſhall become rebellious, and refuſe to obey his laws, his miniſters are directed to admoniſh them of their ſin, and of the diſhonour they do their Prince and Saviour; and if they ſhall refuſe their godly admonitions, then they are to turn them out of the church, that is, that ſociety which Chriſt governs by his laws, protects by his power here, and intends to bleſs with eternal happineſs hereafter.

Being thus turned out of Chriſt's church, (that is, excommunicated) they are ſaid *to be delivered to Satan*, not to be damned, as blaſphemous people love to charge the miniſters of

of Jeſus Chriſt; but as the apoſtle ſaith, *That his ſpirit may be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus*; that is, that ſinners, if they are not utterly loſt, may, with the prodigal when he was forced to herd with ſwine, ſee the happy ſtate they are fallen from, and repent, and deſire to get out of the ſnare and from under the dominion of the devil, and be reſtored to the favour of God. So that excommunication is made uſe of not as a puniſhment only, but as a remedy; that ſinners, being awakened and ſtartled at the evil ſtate they are in, being deprived of all hopes of ſalvation while they are out of the church, they may more earneſtly deſire to be reſtored to God's grace and kingdom, that they may work out their ſalvation with more fear and caution for the time to come.

Were theſe things well conſidered, Chriſtians would not look upon excommunication as a light matter, but would dread it, (when inflicted according to the will of Chriſt for crimes againſt God) they would fear that ſentence as they would hell fire. They would be afraid of church cenſures, and of deſpiſing or weakening that diſcipline which Jeſus Chriſt has appointed to guard his laws from contempt, and to preſerve his ſubjects from deſtruction.

To be delivered to Satan! What a dreadful thought muſt that be to any one who does but read this hiſtory which we are now upon! And

And though every ſubject of Satan is not in the condition of this poor creature, without reſt night and day, cutting himſelf with ſtones, and wandering in the mountains and amongſt the tombs, yet it is miſery enough to be under the government of Satan, whoſe ſervants are ſlaves, and whoſe wages is *eternal miſery*.

The next thing that I would propoſe to your conſideration is this; that as there are, as appears by this hiſtory, legions of evil ſpirits, ſo we are aſſured, for our comfort, that there are legions of good ſpirits much more powerful than the other, and always ready at God's appointment to ſuccour thoſe that ſhall be heirs of ſalvation.

When our bleſſed Lord was aſſaulted by his enemies, St. Peter drew his ſword to defend him; but Jeſus bade him put up his ſword, aſſuring him, that inſtead of twelve diſciples to fight for him, he could, if he deſired it of God, have twelve legions of angels. And when Eliſha was beſet by the Syrians in Dothan, and his ſervant in a fright cried, *Alas! my maſter, what ſhall we do?* the prophet anſwered, *Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.* And immediately *the Lord opened the eyes of the young man: and he ſaw, and behold, the mountain was full of horſes and chariots of fire round about Eliſha.*[p]

Agreeable to which, ſaith the Pſalmiſt,[q] *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them*

[p] 2 Kings vi. 13, &c. [q] Pſal. xxxiv. 7.

that

that fear him, and delivereth them. And in another Pſalm,[r] *He ſhall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*

This being ſo, you ſee, good Chriſtians, what folly it is, and want of faith, for a Chriſtian man to be afraid of the devil or his agents, while he takes care to put himſelf and his concerns under God's protection. The devil himſelf is under God's command, and muſt have his leave, before he can deſtroy the meaneſt creature.

Do but truſt in God, and pray for his protection, and all the powers of hell cannot touch you, nor any thing that belongs to you.

But then I muſt tell you, that the devil may gain a power, though limited, over the bodies or goods of ſuch people as are ſo ignorant or wicked as to have to do with his inſtruments, viz. charmers, witches, fortune-tellers, or the like. People do not conſider this. If they can hope for eaſe from their pains, or any preſent advantage, they are little concerned whether it comes from God or the devil. No man, who calls himſelf a Chriſtian, ought to have to do leſs or more with ſuch people and practices, leſt he become a ſubject of Satan and his kingdom, while he thinks the leaſt of being ſo.

I know that ſimple people have been perſuaded to apply to theſe inſtruments of Satan becauſe they make uſe of ſome good words, as

[r] Pſal. xci. 11.

they ſay, or ſcripture expreſſions; but ſo did the devil himſelf, when he tempted our Saviour to fall down and worſhip him.

Chriſtians ſhould rather conſider, that *affliction cometh not out of the duſt*, (as Job ſpeaks) but is the appointment of God, and not to be removed till God pleaſeth, nor by any means but ſuch as he hath ordained.

And if we conſider, that though St. Paul had the gift of healing in an extraordinary manner, yet he was limited to exerciſe this gift as God ordered it, for he could neither remove *his own thorn in the fleſh*, though he earneſtly prayed to have it removed, nor Timothy's frequent infirmities, which he only adviſed him to help by a prudent uſe of wine and water.

So that afflictions are not always to be removed, even by miracles—never by charms, which are certainly of the devil, who by this means would draw men from truſting in and looking up to God, to truſt in vanities.

Another uſe which I would deſire you to make of this hiſtory is this: never to make a raſh and wrong judgment of the misfortunes that befal other people. God may have ends to ſerve which we know not of; it would be raſhneſs, perhaps, to ſay, that this people deſerved ſuch a loſs and judgment more than any of their neighbours; but we may with ſafety ſay, that Jeſus Chriſt did, in this judgment, teach his church, after a very ſenſible and

affecting

affecting manner, that the devil is a ſpirit of irreſiſtible power, when God lets him looſe to do miſchief; and that he is reſtrained by God, ſo as not to hurt the vileſt creature without leave.

Laſtly; Take notice, and remember, that dreadful as this man's caſe was, that of ſinners, who are poſſeſſed with a ſpirit of uncleanneſs, and continue in it, is more deplorable: they will be tormented, both in body and ſoul, for ever and ever.

You will learn from hence to abhor that great wickedneſs of wiſhing the devil may take either man or beaſt. You ſee what mad work he can make, when he has his liberty. And though God may for his own glory reſtrain him, yet you diſcover, by your horrid wiſh, the moſt wicked diſpoſition that the devil can inſpire any man with.

To conclude the whole: We have no way to be ſecure from this great adverſary of our ſouls and bodies, but by being in God's church, under God's protection, conſtantly praying for his help, and that he would give his angels charge concerning us, truſting in his power, and reſiſting the devil and all his temptations.

And may our gracious God, who knows us to be ſet in the midſt of ſo many and great dangers, that we cannot always ſtand upright; may he grant us ſuch protection as

may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XXII.

THE NECESSITY, AND THE GREAT BLESSING AND COMFORT OF SECURING THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY GHOST.

ROMANS viii. 14.

FOR AS MANY AS ARE LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, THEY ARE THE SONS OF GOD.[a]

WHEN our bleſſed Lord was to leave the world, he aſſured his diſciples, that one ſhould be ſent *to ſupply his place*; to *comfort* them for his abſence; to *guide* them into all truth; to bring all things to their remembrance, whatever he had taught them; to ſanctify their perſons, and bleſs their labours. By whoſe labours we, amongſt many other nations, have been brought out of darkneſs and error, into the clear light and true knowledge of God, and of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.

This indeed is a mighty bleſſing; but this is not all. This would not have anſwered the great love and deſign of God, to ſave his loſt creatures: for ſuch is the weakneſs and corruption of our nature, that though we ſhould be convinced, even by miracles, of the truth

[a] See Rom. viii. 9, 16. Gal. v. 22, 25. 1 John iii. 10, 24.

of

of the goſpel; though we ſhould know the will of God never ſo well; yet we are not able, of ourſelves, to walk in the commandments of God. And therefore it was neceſſary that the ſame Spirit, which enabled the apoſtles of Chriſt to convert the world, ſhould continue to guide, to aſſiſt, to defend, and ſanctify, all ſuch as by their miniſtry ſhould be converted, in the great work of their ſalvation; that is, all ſuch as being convinced of the truth of Chriſtianity do deſire to walk worthy of that name and calling.

For it is too plain and ſad a truth to be denied, that all are not Chriſtians *indeed*, who yet own the truth of the goſpel; and are perſuaded of the neceſſity of obeying it, and have embraced its profeſſion. Not that the Holy Spirit denies his graces, to any that are dedicated to him in baptiſm; but men thruſt him from them; refuſe to aſk his aſſiſtance; grieve him by their evil deeds, and force him to forſake them, and to leave them to themſelves, and to the government of evil ſpirits, who walk about like roaring lions, ſeeking whom they may be permitted to devour, finding them forſaken of God, and prepared for deſtruction.

Foraſmuch, therefore, as it would be no bleſſing for men to be convinced of the truth of the Chriſtian religion, by conſidering the miraculous powers of the Holy Ghoſt, by which it was at firſt eſtabliſhed, unleſs they

afterwards

afterwards live anſwerable to what that religion requires of them, (which they cannot poſſibly do, without the continual grace and aſſiſtance of that ſame Holy Spirit) the ſcriptures therefore are very expreſs in exhorting Chriſtians to ſtrive and pray for the graces of the Holy Spirit, that they may live as they have believed.

And that Chriſtians may not be miſtaken, and lay too much ſtreſs upon their being made in baptiſm *children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven*, without taking great care to live like children of ſo holy a Father, and like people who hope to go to heaven; the ſacred ſcriptures, I ſay, have moſt particularly ſet down the *marks* and *characters* of ſuch Chriſtians as may hope for benefit by their Chriſtian profeſſion. *If any man hath not the Spirit of Chriſt*, ſaith St. Paul,[b] *he is none of his. If we live in the Spirit*, ſaith he, in another place,[c] *let us alſo walk in the Spirit*; that is, if we pretend to be born again, let us live like people that are become new creatures. And in the words which I have choſen for a text, *As many*, ſaith he, *as are led by the Spirit of God, they*, and they only, *are the Sons of God.* They only can call God *father*, ſo as to be heard by him, ſo as to have their prayers anſwered, ſo as to be rewarded by him.

And that Chriſtians may not fancy that they are led by the Spirit of God, when indeed they are not, the ſame Apoſtle[d] ſets down

[b] Rom. viii. 9. [c] Gal. v. 25. [d] Gal. v. 22. in

in plain terms what are the fruits of the Spirit of God, or of one that is led by the Spirit of God. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, courteouſneſs, goodneſs,* (or a readineſs to do good) *faithfulneſs, meekneſs, temperance,* (or continence.)

From this it appears, that men are not maſters of themſelves. Led they muſt be, either by the ſpirit and powers of darkneſs, or by the Spirit of God. It is for this reaſon that God, for Chriſt's ſake, has given us the earneſt of his Spirit in baptiſm; with this aſſurance, that he who ſubmits to be governed by his Spirit, and brings forth fruit worthy of ſuch a favour, he ſhall ſtill have greater favours conferred upon him; but he that is not careful to improve the graces God gives him, from him ſhall be taken away, even what was before beſtowed upon him.

Now, if men, notwithſtanding this caution given them, will be making experiments how far they may neglect their duty, without loſing the earneſt of God's Spirit;—if they will try to govern themſelves by their own reaſon and wiſdom, laying aſide the laws of God;—why then they may, indeed, take themſelves from under God's overſight and direction; but ſervants ſtill they muſt be, and led they muſt be, by the ſpirit and powers of darkneſs; they only change maſters, (for a maſter they muſt have) and how much for the worſe, ſad experience will ſoon ſhew!

It is for this reaſon that humility, and care, and watchfulneſs, are ſo much recommended in ſcripture; leſt Chriſtians ſhould grow conceited of their own wiſdom and ability to govern themſelves; leſt they ſhould neglect the means of grace which God has already given them; and leſt, being often off their guard, the devil ſhould at laſt be permitted to take them into his kingdom and ſervice; from whence they cannot return to God when they pleaſe, no more than a dead man can return to life by his own power.

And this, by the way, is the true reaſon why neither advice, nor authority, neither the hopes of heaven, nor the fears of hell, can prevail with ſome ſinners to forſake the evil ways they have taken. They are not their own maſters; they are ſervants to one, who will not ſuffer them to return to ſober reaſon; they have forſaken God, and God has given them up to a reprobate mind, *a mind void of judgment*; ſo that they commit all iniquity with greedineſs, yea, though they ſee their ruin attends it.

On the other hand, ſuch as are *led by the Spirit of God* do experience his aſſiſtance in the whole courſe of their lives; enlightening their underſtandings, convincing their judgments, awakening their conſciences, curing the perverſeneſs of their nature, and filling their ſouls with all thoſe graces and virtues which are neceſſary to fit men for heaven. Hence it comes

comes to paſs, that men who of themſelves are not able to think one good thought, yet by God's grace and Spirit do very plainly perceive—the excellency of religion and piety, the folly and unreaſonableneſs of ſin; the happineſs that attends the one, and the miſery that muſt be the reward of the other.

Hence it comes to paſs, that a poor weak creature, aſſiſted by the Spirit of God, is able to reſiſt the prince of darkneſs with all his hoſt of evil angels. Hence it is, that man, who is naturally proud and obſtinate, is yet brought to humble himſelf before God, acknowledge his own nothingneſs, confeſs his ſinfulneſs, and that he merits nothing but miſery. Hence it is, that man, who is naturally blind and ignorant in the things which moſt nearly concern his eternal welfare, yet enlightened by the Spirit of God, can very readily apprehend divine truths, can ſee the wiſdom, and goodneſs, and love of God, in all that he has commanded or requires of us. And, to give no more inſtances but this one, of the power of the Spirit of God upon thoſe with whom he dwells, and who ſuffer themſelves to be led by him; hence it is, that Chriſtians are brought to embrace doctrines ſo very uneaſy to fleſh and blood, ſo very unacceptable to corrupt reaſon:—*Bleſſed are they that mourn; bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit; bleſſed are they that are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake. Love your enemies; bleſs them*

them that curſe you; do good to them that uſe you ſpitefully.

Well, though all theſe truths were delivered by the Son of God himſelf; though they were confirmed by infinite miracles; yet if God had not ſent his Holy Spirit into our hearts, we might indeed have heard theſe doctrines, but receive them we never could, much leſs have practiſed them. But by the aſſiſtance of God's good Spirit, all theſe things are made eaſy to the underſtandings, acceptable to the wills, and poſſible in the practice, to all true believers.

Now this great bleſſing, of the *fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt*, is ſo far from being given as a reward of any thing we have done, or can do, that it is beſtowed upon us before we can do any thing at all; namely, when we are received into covenant with God; for then (that is, at our baptiſm) we are made *children of God, a new creation, temples of the Holy Ghoſt, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.* And our life after this, be it never ſo holy, is entirely owing to the conſtant influence, guidance, and aſſiſtance of this bleſſed Spirit.

And it is for this reaſon, that Chriſtians are ſo often admoniſhed not to look upon their own works as any thing in God's account meriting our juſtification; ſince as God, for Chriſt's ſake, forgives us our ſins, ſo it is the Spirit of God alone, which enables us to walk worthy of ſuch a favour all our days; ſhew-

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ing our thankfulneſs for the ſame, by our obedience; and glorifying God for his mercy to us, by an holy life.

Now, foraſmuch as Chriſtians are but too apt to fall into a carnal ſecurity, they are to be often called upon to try whether they have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, or whether they have not loſt, or are in danger of loſing, ſo neceſſary a guide?

But how muſt they do this? Why, they muſt have ſuch marks as cannot poſſibly deceive any, but ſuch as are willing to be deceived. We do not bid them, for inſtance, look to their own inward experiences, ſince even good men often lament their want of faith, even when they are ſupported by it. And many with little reaſon fancy themſelves to have the Spirit of God, when a worſe ſpirit governs them.

We muſt therefore tell Chriſtians, that they have no way ſo ſure of knowing whether they have the Spirit of God, as by conſidering the fruits the ſpirit which poſſeſſeth them produceth in them; namely, whether their great aims and deſigns are to be happy in this world, or to pleaſe God, and to ſecure the fellowſhip of his Holy Spirit unto their lives' end. This, every body is capable of knowing, who will be at the pains of ſearching the bottom of his own heart. For if he finds that his thoughts are chiefly upon another world, and that this ſo affects his heart, that his endeavours after holineſs

holineſs are ſincere; then he may be well aſſured *all is well with him.* He has the word of God for it:[e] *There is verily now no condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit. The ſame Spirit beareth witneſs with our ſpirit,* (or conſcience) *that we are the ſons of God.* That is, if we are led by the Spirit of God to walk worthy of him that hath called us, we may be ſatisfied in our minds, that we are under God's protection, guidance, and favour.

It now remains, that we conſider how we may continue ſo; that is, how we may ſecure *the fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt,* which we received in baptiſm, unto our lives' end.

And firſt; Though we owe all the grace which God has given us to his Holy Spirit, and muſt always depend upon him for the continuance of it, yet we muſt ſtill exert our beſt endeavours in the uſe of thoſe means which God has ordained, in order to fit us for heaven. For certainly men take the moſt effectual way to deprive themſelves of God's aſſiſtance, when they neglect to do what is already in their own power, that is, what God has enabled them to do, though it be never ſo little; for when a man does what he can, it is a ſign that he is ſincere. And therefore, at the ſame time that the ſcriptures bid us to depend upon God, they exhort us *to work out our own ſalvation;*[f] that is, on our part, to do

[e] Rom. viii. 1, 16. [f] Phil. ii. 12.

all

all that God by his preventing grace has convinced us we ought to do, and which by his aſſiſting grace he will enable us to do, if we ſincerely aſk his help.

And ſecondly; That we may ſecure the preſence and aſſiſtance of God's Spirit, we muſt be careful to mind his godly motions, exciting us to our duty, checking us when we are doing amiſs, and comforting us when we do what pleaſeth God. Not to do this is, as the apoſtle ſpeaks,[g] *doing deſpite to the Spirit of grace*; *reſiſting the Holy Ghoſt*, as St. Stephen ſays[h] the Jews and their fathers had done, which brought deſtruction upon them.

Laſtly; We muſt above all things be careful not to grieve and provoke him to forſake us, by ſenſuality, by uncleanneſs, or by living in any known ſin; and even by an undue application to, and an affection for, earthly things, which, our Lord aſſures us,[i] *will choak the word*, and the ſpirit, by which it becomes a means of grace, and it becometh unfruitful.

If to this we add our ſincere prayers, out of a true ſenſe of our own inability, and God's readineſs to help us through the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, we ſhall then be ſecure of the aſſiſtance of God's holy Spirit, being aſſured by our Lord himſelf,[k] that our heavenly Father *will give the Holy Spirit to them that aſk him*, as certainly and readily as any father will give good things to his children that aſk

[g] Heb. x. 29. [h] Acts vii. 51. [i] Matt. xiii. 22. [k] Luke xi. 13.

him

him bread, or what is needful for their life and well-being.

And now, good Chriſtians, you ſee the neceſſity of *Chriſtian baptiſm*, by which we have the Spirit given unto us; without which Spirit it is impoſſible for any man to work out his ſalvation. You ſee the reaſon why very many, though they have received the earneſt of God's Spirit in baptiſm, are yet as wicked as thoſe that never heard whether there was any Holy Ghoſt or not. They have neglected his motions; they have grieved him by their evil deeds; they have forced him from them, and are become ſervants of another maſter, whoſe delight is in wickedneſs. You ſee therefore the neceſſity there is of *walking warily*, leſt by adding one ſin to another we provoke God to leave us to ourſelves; for then you have heard who it is that immediately takes poſſeſſion of us.

You ſee of what little uſe it is to be convinced of the truth of the Chriſtian religon, if we do not ſeriouſly apply to the Spirit for grace to live as becomes the goſpel of Chriſt. Laſtly; you ſee the danger of neglecting the means of grace which the providence of God affords us:—it is the ready way to be forſaken of God, and left to ourſelves.

To conclude. Do we deſire the ſatisfaction of knowing whether we are under the government of the Spirit of God? If ſo, we are to conſider whether we are led by the Spirit

of

of God; that is, whether the fruits and effects of that Holy Spirit appear in our lives and converſations. If, for inſtance, we love God, and endeavour to pleaſe him to the beſt of our power; if we love our neighbour in deed and in truth; that is, doing good as well as giving good words; if we are juſt in all our dealings, doing to others as we would be dealt with ourſelves; if we deny our own wills, and reſolve never to pleaſe ourſelves by diſpleaſing God; if we are afraid of ſin, and keep at a diſtance from it; if we apply to God in all our neceſſities, and willingly ſubmit to what his providence ſhall order for us; why then we are ſure theſe are the fruits of the Spirit, that he abideth with us, and will be with us, while we continue to walk in this way.

On the other hand:—If a man has caſt off the fear of God; runs headlong into temptations; lives in the practice of known ſins; is fond of every thing that may divert his thoughts from the care of his ſoul; why then he may be ſure of it, he is led by the devil, and is in the way of perdition.

Let us therefore not flatter ourſelves in a concern of ſo great moment. A wicked life is a ſure mark that men do not belong to God. The apoſtle ſpeaks plain to this purpoſe:[1] *In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the devil: whoſoever doeth not righteouſneſs is not of God.*

[1] 1 John iii. 10.

In

In one word:—If we would ſecure the friendſhip and fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt, we muſt liſten to him, and obey his godly motions; we muſt keep a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards man. We muſt pray daily for his gracious aſſiſtance, and commit ourſelves entirely to his guidance and bleſſing. And that we may not believe every ſpirit, we muſt ſtill have an eye to the word of God, eſtabliſhed by miracles; by which we ſhall eaſily diſtinguiſh *his will* from the ſuggeſtions of our own corrupt hearts; we ſhall ſee the truth, be governed by it, and ſhall be ſecure from fear of evil.

Now unto him who ſanctifieth us, and to Jeſus who has redeemed us, and to God our Creator, be all honour and glory for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXIII.

CHRISTMAS, EPIPHANY, &c.

THE REASON AND THE EXTENT OF GOD's LOVE IN SENDING HIS SON INTO THE WORLD.

O DEUS, fons miſericordiæ, illumina amore tuo oculos meos, ut charitatem tuam erga nos immenſam ego ipſe agnoſcam, et gratiæ tuæ delicias adeo deguſtem, ut mirabilia tui amoris ex verbis meis reluceant, ut ego, et populus qui me audiunt, hoc amore impleti, omnia ea, quæ tibi diſplicent, abnegemus, et in imaginem tuam magis magiſque transformemur. Concede hæc propter Jeſum Chriſtum amoris tui filium. Amen.

1 JOHN iv. 9.

IN THIS WAS MANIFESTED THE LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS US, BECAUSE THAT GOD SENT HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON INTO THE WORLD, THAT WE MIGHT LIVE THROUGH HIM,[a] [THAT IS, THROUGH FAITH IN HIM.]

EVERY thoughtful man has two things much at heart:—*How he may appeaſe God*, and *how he may pleaſe him.*

1*ſt*. How he may *appeaſe God*; for every man for himſelf knows, that he has done many things to offend him.

[a] See John iii. 16. Rom. xv. 10. 2 Cor. v. 18. 1 John iv. 19.

2*dly*. How he may live ſo as to *pleaſe God*: for we know by experience, that if men were left to their own inventions, they would take ſuch ways to gain the favour of God, as would rather provoke his diſpleaſure.

Now, God has made theſe two things known to us by Jeſus Chriſt, whom he ſent into the world for theſe very purpoſes, *to reconcile us to God*, and *to make known to us the will of God*; that is, how we may live ſo as to pleaſe him: or, as Zacharias expreſſes both theſe bleſſings,[b] *That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies*, (and which had made us enemies to God) *might ſerve him without fear*, (becauſe we ſerve him as he has appointed us) *in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him, all the days of our life.*

In this (ſaith St. John) *was manifeſted the love of God* (of God who did humble himſelf to behold ſuch a ſinful generation of creatures) *towards us*; that is, the whole race of mankind, who had no reaſon to expect ſuch a favour, or that God ſhould ſend to viſit them, except for their iniquities.

And yet ſuch was the love of God, that he ſent—not an angel, but—*his Son, his only begotten Son, his beloved Son*, into the world; that *we*, that is, the world to which he was ſent; or, as St. John elſewhere expreſſeth it,[c] *all that believe in him, might have everlaſting life*,—might be enabled to attain eternal life through faith in him.

[b] Luke i. 74. [c] John iii. 16.

Every

Every ſerious Chriſtian, who ſhall be convinced of this, will have reaſon to rejoice that God ſent his Son into the world; and no reaſonable body will blame him for it. But for people to rejoice they know not why, to be extremely pleaſed with the return of this ſeaſon, [Chriſtmas] without knowing, and without valuing, the bleſſing of a Redeemer; this is what makes many thoughtful Chriſtians ſad, when others are full of mirth and jollity.

To prevent this, I will ſet before you a ſhort and plain account of theſe following things:—

Firſt; The reaſon of God's ſending his Son into the world; namely, *that we might live through him.*

Secondly; We ſhall conſider the extent of God's love in ſending his Son, *that we might live*, that as many as believe in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.

Laſtly; We ſhall conſider, what obligations this love of God lays upon Chriſtians.

I. Let us firſt ſeriouſly conſider, *The reaſon of God's ſending his Son into the world.* The text ſays, in general, that it was, *that we might live through him*; that is, that we might not only eſcape thoſe puniſhments of which our conſciences were afraid; but alſo that we might be made happy beyond what we could either deſire or deſerve.

To give you a ſhort, but plain account of this matter:—You are to conſider, *that God made man upright*, that is, holy like himſelf: that

that while man continued ſo, he was happy both in the favour of God, and in the peace of conſcience which he enjoyed; but at laſt, through the malice of the devil, and the diſobedience of Adam, ſin entered into the world, which has been the occaſion of all the miſchiefs and miſeries that we meet with, or hear of. Particularly, there is one moſt miſerable effect of ſin, that all mankind are ſenſible of, and that is, *the fear of puniſhment*. It being moſt natural for every man who knows he has done amiſs, to expect to hear of it again. So that when the Pſalmiſt ſaith, *My ſorrow is continually before me; mine iniquities are gone over my head, and as an heavy burthen, they are too heavy for me*; he ſpeaks not his own ſenſe only, but the ſenſe of every man living, whoſe conſcience is awake, and under the guilt of ſin.

And this is the very true reaſon why all mankind, ever ſince the Fall, have been ſeeking out ways of appeaſing God, and, if poſſible, of making their minds eaſy under the fear of his diſpleaſure for the ſins they had committed, and were daily liable to.

Now God, who foreſaw all this diſorder even before the Fall, deſigned from the beginning to redeem man from this ſad condition of blindneſs, fear, and uncertainty.

And firſt, Chriſt was promiſed to the Fathers, to whom alſo the law was given, to the end that knowing their ſin by the law and how unable they were to keep that law which

their conſciences told them was holy, juſt, and good, they might with more impatience deſire the coming of Chriſt. And becauſe he was to be *a light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as *the glory of Iſrael*, God ſent him at a time *when all iniquity did abound*, that men might ſee plainly that it was not for any works of theirs that he ſent his Son into the world, but for his goodneſs and for his truth's ſake. And after men had ſufficiently wearied themſelves in ſeeking for peace and happineſs, by ways of their own invention, and all to no manner of purpoſe; it was then that God ſent his only Son into the world, *that men might live through him*;—that they might know how to live ſo as to pleaſe God, how to appeaſe God when they have offended him, and how to ſecure his favour both here and hereafter: *In this the love of God was manifeſted.*

In ſhort; God's deſign being to recover man to a ſtate of happineſs, from which he fell by ſin, there was no other way of reſtoring him to happineſs, but by *holineſs.*

The way God has taken to bring this about has been by ſending his Son into the world, who being the expreſs image of God, *by him* we know what God is, and what will pleaſe him.

By him, for inſtance, we know the exceeding great love of God towards men; for God having from the beginning purpoſed to ſend his Son into the world, all the wickedneſs, all the

the provocations of men, could not divert his goodneſs and faithfulneſs from doing it.

By him we know that God is ready to forgive the greateſt ſinners upon their repentance, and return to their duty.

And whereas we are but too apt to fall, *by him* we know that God is able and ready to ſupport us by his grace; and that he will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, provided we aſk his help ſincerely.

That men may not vainly depend upon the love of God without caring to deſerve it, his Son has aſſured us, that God is juſt as well as good, and that he has judgments as well as mercies in ſtore for ſuch as ſhall deſerve them.

And then, that we may certainly know what will pleaſe God, he has given us a very few plain directions in his Sermon on the Mount, contained in the fifth, ſixth, and ſeventh chapters of St. Matthew. There we learn, in what true happineſs conſiſts: not in any thing the world is apt to doat on, not in the abundance which men poſſeſs; but in poverty of ſpirit, in a godly ſorrow for our own ſins, and for the ſins of others, in meekneſs, in hungering and thirſting after righteouſneſs, in mercy and loving-kindneſs, in purity of heart, in making peace, and in ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake.

And becauſe he knew very well how hardly men would be brought to eſteem theſe things, much leſs to ſtrive after them, until they could be

be perſuaded—that it is no great matter what a man's lot is in this world, provided he can but pleaſe God; he therefore choſe to be born of mean parents, in a mean place and condition. He had neither houſe nor harbour, and yet he never repined; teaching us that this is not the world where we are to look for happineſs. And being preſſed with the bittereſt ſufferings, he ſtill ſubmitted to the will of God, giving us a rule how to behave ourſelves when God ſuffers us to be afflicted. *Thus we live through him*; that is, by his example we learn what will pleaſe God. And in this was manifeſted the love of God, in that he has ſuited this means of attaining happineſs to the very meaneſt capacity.

It is not every body that can attain to any great meaſure of knowledge; but every body who hears the life of Chriſt, and believes him to be ſent from God, who ſees the miracles he wrought, and the example he ſet his followers, muſt be convinced, that he was aſſiſted by a Divine Power; that whatever he ſaid was true; that whatever he promiſed was certain; and that whatever he did was worthy to be imitated.

From all which it appears, that the gracious God has dealt with us as with reaſonable creatures, and has made uſe of the moſt plain and powerful arguments and motives to make us *holy*, that we may at laſt be happy. He ſent not one to force a law upon his creatures by the

the ſword and bloodſhed, but he ſent his only Son, with works ſufficient to ſhew that he came from God; with offers of pardon and grace upon moſt merciful terms; with power to forgive ſins; with rewards and puniſhments; requiring nothing of us, but what he himſelf in our nature had performed and ſuffered, and what he would enable every faithful ſervant of his to undergo with patience, if not with pleaſure.

By this time I hope you underſtand, that the deſign of the goſpel is to mend that diſorder which ſin has cauſed in the world. That this is not to be done any other way, than by rooting it out, and eſtabliſhing holineſs in the room of it. That God ſent his Son into the world for this very end, that is, to redeem us from death, *by redeeming us from our vain converſation.* And that we ought to value the love of God by the price of our redemption.

And we ſhall ſtill have more reaſon to do ſo, when we conſider, in the ſecond place,

II. *The extent of this love of God, in ſending his Son into the world.* And indeed the ſcriptures are very plain and expreſs as to this matter:—*God* (ſaith St. John[d]) *ſo loved the world, that he ſent his Son, that the world through him might be ſaved.* And that God was no reſpecter of perſons in thus loving the world, we are aſſured by another apoſtle,[e] his will is that *all* men ſhould be ſaved. And St. Peter affirms, that even ſuch as periſh, through their own

[d] Chap. iii. 17. [e] 1 Tim. ii. 4.

own wilful diſobedience, are of the number of thoſe whom Jeſus Chriſt came to ſave *They denied the Lord that bought them*; that bought and would have ſaved them, but they brought upon themſelves deſtruction.

Nay; to take away all manner of ſcruple, and to apply this moſt comfortable truth to the conſciences of ſinners, who are apt to fear the worſt, St. Paul ſpeaks of this after a moſt convincing manner:[f]—As the ſin of Adam (ſaith he) affected all his poſterity, as by one offence judgment came upon all men to condemnation, ſo the merits of Chriſt were deſigned to redeem *all* the poſterity of Adam; for *by the righteouſneſs of one, the free gift came upon all men unto juſtification of life.* As ſure therefore as I am one of thoſe who by the ſin of Adam am become weak, corrupt, and wicked, ſo ſure am I redeemed by Jeſus Chriſt. And the ſin that does ſo eaſily beſet me, directs me to him who came into the world to ſave me.

This was the doctrine of Chriſt, and this he taught by his example.

The very perſons who crucified him had an intereſt in the ſufferings they made him to undergo; otherwiſe he would not have prayed for them that God would forgive them. St. Stephen followed his maſter's example, and prayed for his murderers. And the church of Chriſt ſtill continues to pray for Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks; holding this truth,

[f] Rom. v.

that

that the love of God, and the merits of Jeſus Chriſt, extend to all men who will lay hold of the mercy; *That whoever believeth in Chriſt ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

And by this charitable practice, our church endeavours to bring all her people to a god-like temper of charity and good-will for all who bear the image of God; and by this practice ſhe endeavours to ſupport the ſpirits of dejected penitents, who will have no reaſon to deſpair, ſince the greateſt ſinners are in a capacity of ſalvation.

We are obliged indeed to ſay, *in a capacity to be ſaved*; for the truth is, all men are not ſaved, that might be ſaved if it were not for their own wilful blindneſs, reſiſting the love and the counſel of God for their good.

Many will not hear and be made ſenſible of the danger they are in; others will not forſake their ſins for any conſideration whatever; and many even deſpiſe the very offers of pardon and grace. In all theſe caſes, the Saviour of the world declares, that it is men's own fault if they are not ſaved. *Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.*[g]

If people, when ſalvation is offered them, will notwithſtanding unworthily abuſe the mercy; if men, to whom God has manifeſted himſelf, will not retain God in their knowledge; if thoſe that have been enlightened, and have eſcaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour

[g] John v. 40.

viour Jeſus Chriſt; if *they* are again entangled therein, and are finally loſt; this is not for want of means to be ſaved, but they will not be ſaved, they will not ſeriouſly attend to the word preached, they will not believe, at leaſt they will not conſider, the importance of a judgment to come, nor will they ſubmit to the conditions of attaining eternal happineſs.

But then it muſt not be ſaid—that God did not love them, that God did not deſire their welfare, who has declared his Son to be the Saviour, not of ſome few only, but of *the whole world*. And therefore the account of his birth is ſaid, by the angels, to be *tidings of great joy to all people*; that is, to all that can be prevailed upon, by the goodneſs of God, by the love of Chriſt, by the labours of his miniſters, to receive him for their Lord and Saviour.

And now we come, in the third and laſt particular, to conſider,

III. *What obligations this love of God lays upon Chriſtians.* For certainly God did not deſign that all this love ſhould be loſt upon us. He expects ſome return, ſome fruits of his Son's humiliations, and labours, and ſufferings.

Shall I put you in mind how God, by his prophet, reaſoned with the people of Iſrael? *Judge* (ſaith he) *I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.* The caſe was ſo plain, that he refers it to themſelves: *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*

it? Wherefore, when I looked that it ſhould bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?[h]

Now the puniſhment of this ingratitude, this unfruitfulneſs, followeth: *I will take away the hedge thereof, and it ſhall be eaten up, trodden down, laid waſte.* And ſo it came to paſs. You can any of you apply this as well as I.

To proceed therefore:—The love of God in ſending his Son into the world, obliges us to three things eſpecially.

1*ſt.* To love the Father, who ſent his Son that we might live through him.

2*dly.* To love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who condeſcended to come down to ſave us. And,

3*dly.* To love all mankind, for whoſe ſakes, as well as for ours, he came down from heaven.

I. And firſt; *If God has ſhewn ſo great a love for us, we ought in return to love him again.* But do we find that it is ſo with us? So far from it, that it is with pain and unwillingneſs that we think of his favours; it is with difficulty we aſk his mercies; and it is ſeldom that we thank him for them; and yet we ſay *it is our duty to love him with all our hearts.* We know we love a thouſand things better, and yet we are eaſy.

But what muſt a man do who knows this to be his caſe? Why: he muſt lament the blindneſs, the perverſeneſs of his nature, which will not ſuffer him to love the very Author of his being, and well-being. He muſt pray God to increaſe his love; and muſt endeavour to

[h] Iſaiah, chap. v.

to leſſen his love for the world. In ſhort; we muſt do what we can, and God by his grace will ſupply the reſt. Give God thanks for the bleſſings you receive; ſubmit patiently to all his dealings with you; reſign yourſelf wholly to his good-will and pleaſure; depend upon his word, upon his promiſes, upon his goodneſs; and your love to God will increaſe daily, and God will love you more and more, and will ſupply all your defects by the merits of his Son.

And that you may not be deceived, and think you love God, when indeed you do not; remember *that love and obedience always go together*. That where there is not a deſire to pleaſe God, and a fear to offend him, *there is no true love of God.*

II. *Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt demands the next place in our love*; for it is only by him that ſinners have hope. It was he, who, though Lord of the whole creation, *took upon him the form of a ſervant*, that he might ſet us an example of humility, the moſt acceptable grace of God, and that he might effectually convince us, that this is not the world we were made for, and that in truth it is dangerous to have to do with it.

It is he, whoſe whole life for our ſakes, was made up of ſufferings; that having borne all the infirmities of our nature, he might more affectionately pity and ſuccour us, while we are in this vale of miſery.

It

It was he, who went about doing good, that he might, after the moſt ſenſible manner, ſhew us what was moſt pleaſing to God.

By him we know God, *for he is the expreſs image of the Father.* We know that he is good to all, that his tender mercy is over all his works, that he deſires not the ruin of his creatures, that he is long-ſuffering, and of great pity, for ſo was his Son our Lord Chriſt.

And when no other ſacrifice would atone for the ſins of the world, it was on *him* that all our iniquities were laid; to *him* we owe our redemption, even the forgiveneſs of our ſins.

And laſtly; it is this ſame Jeſus, whom God has exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to all that come to God by him; for to him the Father has committed all judgment. So that all our hopes of pardon, the acceptance of our prayers, the grace of God, the conqueſt of our enemies, all our comfort on earth, all our hopes of heaven, depend entirely upon our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and on what he has done for us. Well therefore might the apoſtle ſay, *That if any man love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let him be accurſed.*

III. And becauſe *he gave himſelf for the life of the world, we are therefore bound to love all mankind, becauſe Jeſus Chriſt did ſo*; not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth. And that we may be more effectually engaged to do ſo, God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth; and all theſe being

ing become equally the children of wrath, he has redeemed them all by one Saviour. Shall we think then any unworthy of our love, whom God has thought worthy of his?

Let us have a care of making the ſame evil uſe of the favour of God, as we find the Jews did, who, becauſe God called them his own people, could not imagine that he had any regard or concern for any other nation. And ſo narrow, ſo ſelfiſh a love had poſſeſſed that whole people, that when God ſent his apoſtles to, and poured his ſpirit upon the Gentiles, they were amazed to find that God had granted repentance unto life to a people whom they had in their own thoughts given up to deſtruction.

Rather let us imitate the boundleſs goodneſs of God, who has embraced the whole creation within the arms of his love. And our Lord Jeſus Chriſt has made *love* the badge of all his faithful members, and by which they are known to belong to him; not a *ſelfiſh love*, for ſuch as think juſt as I do, for ſuch as will be governed by the reaſons that prevail with me; but *charity* is a tender regard for the whole creation of God, loving the perſons of thoſe whoſe errors I cannot cloſe with; pitying the blindneſs, bearing with the perverſeneſs, praying for the converſion of thoſe that I ſuppoſe to be enemies to truth and virtue.

In ſhort; we have this commandment from God,[i] that *He that loveth God, love his brother alſo.*

And theſe are the great obligations which the love of God lays upon all Chriſtians.

And now let me lay before you (in a few words) ſome uſeful obſervations upon what has been ſaid upon this ſubject.

And *firſt*; when Chriſtians hear ſuch ſcriptures as theſe, *That God ſent his Son into the world, that we might live through him*; they are apt to miſtake the meaning, and fancy that there is now no danger, ſince Jeſus Chriſt has paid their ranſom. Why now, this is not to magnify, but to ebuſe, the grace of God. Chriſt hath indeed redeemed us from the wrath to come, but then he muſt alſo redeem us from all iniquity, and *purify unto himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.*[k]

In one word:—The life which Jeſus Chriſt has purchaſed for us muſt be begun in this world. So that all our hopes and happineſs hereafter depend upon our being made conformable to Chriſt in this life: *That our old man being crucified with him, the body of ſin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve ſin. That as Chriſt was raiſed from the dead, ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life;*[l] *that we, being dead to ſin, ſhould live unto righteouſneſs.*[m]

[i] 1 John iv. 21. [k] Titus ii. 14.
[l] Rom. vi. 4, 6. [m] 1 Peter ii. 24.

2*dly*. When

2dly. When we consider what Jesus Christ has done for us, we shall have good reason to believe that the punishment of sinners will be unspeakably great, since the Son of God would not have left the glories of heaven, and lived a miserable life on earth, but that he knew if sinners were not reconciled unto God, their condition would be miserable beyond expression and without remedy.

You will observe, in the next place, that our redemption is a work of mere grace. God sent his Son into the world, when there was nothing in us to move him to it but only our misery. Whatever pretence mankind had to the favour of God before the fall, it was all forfeited; and this is the reason that the *free grace of God* is so much spoken of in the gospel, that men may not arrogate any thing to themselves, but that we may be humble and thankful, and obedient to the Lord that bought us; that we may be concerned to please, and afraid to offend him.

And to all that are thus affected with the goodness of God, resolving by his grace to live according to his Son's doctrine and example; to such, one would use our Saviour's words, *Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.* But to such as rejoice they consider not why, the words of Solomon suit better their condition, *The end of that mirth is heaviness.*

We ſhall conclude this diſcourſe with what the Spirit hath ſaid by St. Paul, to ſhew the great obligations we owe to God, in this diſpenſation of his mercy; who thus expreſſeth it,[n] *Chriſt Jeſus is of God made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption.* He is our *wiſdom*, by making known to us the will of God, and his glorious perfections; our *righteouſneſs*, by ſatisfying in our nature the juſtice of God, and by reſtoring us to God's favour; our *ſanctification*, by his Holy Spirit working in us true holineſs, and by that ſeparating us from an evil world; our *redemption* from the greateſt of all ſlaveries, the ſlavery of the devil, and the ſins he tempts men to, and from a ſtate of damnation.

O Jeſus, for theſe mighty bleſſings, all love, and glory, and thankſgiving, be unto Thee, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, by us, and all that are partakers of theſe mighty favours. *Amen.*

[n] 1 Cor. i. 30.

SERMON

SERMON XXIV.

THE NECESSITY OF LOVING JESUS CHRIST AS OUR SAVIOUR, PRINCE, AND LAWGIVER; AND THE TRUE MARKS OF SUCH A LOVE.

1 COR. xvi. 22.

IF ANY MAN LOVE NOT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA, MARAN-ATHA;[a] [THAT IS, ACCURSED WHEN THE LORD COMETH TO JUDGMENT.]

SAINT PAUL tells us, the verſe before, that he wrote theſe words, and the ſalutation following, *with his own hand*, as a matter that it concerned them to take notice of. And, truly, it concerns all Chriſtians to have ſome good aſſurance of this, *that they do indeed love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, leſt, when he comes to judgment, they ſhould fall under this dreadful ſentence, to be for ever ſeparated from their Lord and Saviour.

The words are plain, and poſitive, and full of terror. And I have made choice of them, that I may at once awaken your attention, and put us all upon a moſt neceſſary enquiry, *whether our love be ſuch as it ſhould be?* For it is very certain, people may deceive themſelves,

[a] See Pſ. xlv. 10. Matth. x. 37. John viii. 42; xiv. 15, 21, 24. Eph. iii. 16; vi. 24. Phil. iii. 8. 2 Tim. ii. 12. 1 John ii. 15.

and

and hope that they are Chriſt's faithful ſervants, and that they ſhew their love ſufficiently, either by endearing expreſſions, or by their zeal for their own particular way of ſerving him, by ſtanding up for the truths of the goſpel, or even by rejoicing with his church when ſhe celebrates the memorials of his love to mankind.

Now, though all theſe are worthy expreſſions of reſpect, yet they are by no means to be depended upon as infallible marks of our love to Jeſus Chriſt; becauſe there have been people, in all ages, who have glorified in the name of Chriſt, have contended for the privileges of the goſpel, have ſpoken of Jeſus Chriſt in words full of love and reſpect; and yet have been utter ſtrangers to *that love* which ſhould have appeared in their lives as well as in their profeſſions. —

As for *ſuch as deny the Lord that bought them*,[b] charity will not ſuffer us to believe that there are any ſuch preſent. But then there are too many, who (as we ſaid juſt now) are under a deluſion without knowing it.

1ſt. There are many, for inſtance, who love Jeſus Chriſt, as he is their *Saviour*, who do not love him as he is their *Prince* and *Lawgiver*.

2*dly*. There are many who love him, but not heartily, becauſe they do not know their own miſery without the bleſſing of a Redeemer.

3*dly*. There

[b] 2 Peter ii. 1.

3*dly*. There are many, very many, who hope that they may love Jeſus Chriſt, without renouncing the love of the world.

4*thly*. There are too many who, miſtaking the marks of a love for Chriſt, miſſpend their time in vanity, and miſplace their affections.

Laſtly; It is impoſſible to love Jeſus Chriſt as we ſhould do, unleſs, aſſiſted by a divine power, we renounce all other affections contrary to ſuch love.

Theſe, therefore, are things fit to be made plain; and theſe are the particulars, which, by the favour of God, I ſhall now inſiſt upon.

I. We ſhall firſt conſider *the deluſion of thoſe who love Jeſus Chriſt as a Saviour, but do not love him as he is their Prince and Lawgiver*.

When the love of Jeſus Chriſt is firſt announced, people look upon it as a moſt reaſonable duty, and the moſt eaſy to be received: they conſider him as a Redeemer; *that he came into the world to ſave ſinners*;[c] that by his means God is reconciled to us, for he laid down his life for us, and *the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all*; that he is our Advocate with the Father, our great High Prieſt, making interceſſion for us continually; that *we are all the children of God by faith in Jeſus Chriſt*;[d] *and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs of Chriſt*.[e]

Theſe are all ſuch glorious privileges, purchaſed for us by Chriſt, that it ſeems impoſ-

[c] 1 Tim. i. 15. [d] Gal. iii. 26. [e] Rom. viii. 17.

ſible

ſible for any Chriſtians not to love him. And we do not wonder that the prophets, foreſeeing his incarnation and appearance in the world, called him *the deſire of all nations*;[f] that *all nations ſhould call him bleſſed*;[g] that *all the families of the earth ſhould be happy in him.*[h]

But then we are apt to forget, that this *Saviour*, whom we love and admire, is our *prince* and *lawgiver*; that we are his ſubjects, and bound to obey all his laws; that he is to be our *judge*, and will call us to a very ſtrict account, if we pretend to be his ſervants, to *love him*, and *do not the things which he commands us.* And this makes a ſtrange alteration in our affections, when we call to mind what our Redeemer expects from us; what ſtrict laws this prince has given for the good government of his ſubjects; and upon what conditions he will be a *ſaviour* to us.

Theſe thoughts are apt to leſſen our joys, and we are almoſt ready to ſay, in the words of the prophet Iſaiah, liii. 3, *there is no beauty in him that we ſhould deſire him.* And it is *then* we find *that* a matter of difficulty, which *before* we thought the eaſieſt duty in the world. And indeed it is the hardeſt thing to fleſh and blood to *love him ſincerely*, who commands us, for his ſake, to renounce all that is dear to us in this world; to deny one's ſelf a great many things which we are very paſſionately fond of; to keep under the body, and bring it

[f] Hag. ii. 7. [g] Pſal. lxxii. 17. [h] Gen. xxviii. 14.

into

into ſubjection: not to conform ourſelves according to this preſent evil world, for which we are ſure to be reproached; and yet to eſteem this reproach of Chriſt before all worldly advantages; to glory in nothing ſo much as in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by which we are taught to deſpiſe all that the world doats on.

Theſe are the commands of Jeſus Chriſt, concerning which hear what our Saviour himſelf ſaith:[i] *Ye are my friends, ye are they that love me, if ye do whatever I command you.*

When, therefore, we read the hiſtory of our Lord's life with a ſenſible pleaſure; when we admire at his wonderful humility in the manner of his birth; for the Son of the Higheſt to be born of a poor Virgin, in an obſcure town, in the worſt part of that poor town, to live a private life, to want many of the conveniences even of *ſuch* a life; to ſee him refuſe to be made a king, content to be called an impoſtor, a dealer with the devil; ſuffering himſelf to be betrayed, to be ſcorned, to be crucified; and all this to ſatisfy the juſtice of God for his ſinful creatures that had offended him. No Chriſtian can hear theſe things without being ſenſibly affected.

But then we ſhould conſider the meaning of this wonderful order of Providence; that it was to convince us, that this is not the world we were made for; that it is no great matter how poor we are born, how many things we want,

[i] John xiv. 15.

want, how much we are deſpiſed, what ſevere things we ſuffer, provided we do our duty in that ſtate of life in which the Providence of God has placed us; for as much as the happineſs which God has provided for them that love him, will make ſufficient amends for whatever they want or ſuffer here.

To love Jeſus Chriſt, therefore, is to love his *humility*, his *patience*, his *ſelf-denial*, and to imitate them; and this will diſpoſe us to love him as our *Prince* and *Lawgiver*; to love his *commands*, and to *obey them* to the beſt of our power; without which all other inſtances and expreſſions of love will ſignify very little. *If ye love me*, ſaith Chriſt himſelf, *keep my commandments*. This is the end of all religion.

We dedicate our children to Chriſt *in baptiſm*, that they may be bound betimes to keep his laws; they promiſe to do ſo themſelves at *confirmation*. We renew theſe vows every time we receive the Lord's Supper; we pray to God in his name; we read his life, and remember his ſayings; and *all this* that we may be prevailed on to keep his laws. And we plainly delude ourſelves, if we hope that any other expreſſions of our love will excuſe us from obeying his commands. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, bnt he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

What! ſhall we ſay then, that there are but few that love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity,

rity, and that the reſt are *anathema?* We dare not pronounce this ſentence: that muſt be left till the Lord comes to judgment. In the mean time, it nearly concerns us all to prevent that ſentence, and to poſſeſs our hearts with ſuch a love of Chriſt, as may at once affect our hearts, and influence our lives.

To obtain this, it is neceſſary, above all things,

II. *That we be thoroughly convinced of our miſery, without the bleſſing of a Redeemer.*

To be *born in ſin*, and to be *the children of wrath*; this we are taught as ſoon as we can ſpeak. But who conſiders the meaning of theſe words, even while we feel the ſad effects of the ſin of our firſt parents? The words of the text offer us an inſtance of our miſery.

It is unqueſtionably true that God made man to *love* and to *ſerve* him. Our firſt parents before the fall did ſo undoubtedly; and it was their higheſt pleaſure to love God and to obey him. Do we find it now ſo with us? Very far from it. We think of him with pain and difficulty; we obey him unwillingly; we are backward in aſking his bleſſings, and we eaſily forget to thank him for his favours; we boldly break his laws, and we are not ſufficiently afraid when we have done ſo.

What a ſtrange diſorder is this! That a creature made to love and to depend upon God, ſhould love every thing better than God; ſhould find an uneaſineſs in God's preſence;

ſhould

ſhould take delight in ſuch things as diſpleaſe God; and ſhould think it a burthen even to aſk a favour of him!

This plainly ſhews, that men, by nature, do not love God; that they have loſt the image of God, in which they were created; that God is angry with them; and that it is only for Chriſt's ſake that he ſhould ever be reconciled to them.

A man muſt be blind not to ſee that this is the condition of every man, and that it is a miſerable one without the bleſſing of a Redeemer; eſpecially if we conſider how much worſe we have made our condition by the many actual tranſgreſſions of our lives. So that we may truly ſay, in the words of Iſaiah,[k] *Our iniquities have ſeparated betwixt us and our God, and our ſins have hid his face from us.* The conſequence of which muſt be ſhame, and ſorrow, and fear, leſt we ſhould be for ever miſerable. And miſerable we ſhould have been, had not Jeſus Chriſt undertaken to redeem us. It is to him we owe our redemption, even the forgiveneſs of our ſins. *God ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*[l]

Whoever lays theſe things to heart, and endeavours to poſſeſs his ſoul with a ſenſe of its miſery, and with the love of Chriſt in reconciling us to God, will eaſily ſee the bleſſing of a Redeemer, and will have one of the ſtrongeſt motives to love him with all his heart. Our

[k] Chap. lix. 2. [l] 1 John iv. 9.

Lord

Lord would convince us of the truth of this, in that moſt affecting parable recorded by St. Luke:[m] *There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Which of them will love him moſt? Certainly he to whom he forgave moſt.*

I ſhall conclude this particular with the obſervation of a very learned man,[n] to this purpoſe: "Our redemption being a work of as "great mercy, *at leaſt to us*, as was that of our "creation, we could not but love our Re-"deemer even as much as God that made us. "It was therefore abſolutely neceſſary that "God ſhould redeem us, otherwiſe we ſhould "have been obliged to have loved a creature "*equal* with God our creator."

III. We come now to another deluſion of Chriſtians, who hope that they may *love Jeſus Chriſt well enough without renouncing the love of the world.* To prevent this, our Lord has expreſsly told us, *that no man can ſerve two maſters:* and all thoughtful people have found it ſo by experience. For if the love of the world rule in our hearts, the love of Chriſt will find little entertainment there. And we are required to love him *with all our hearts*, on purpoſe to cure us of an immoderate love for the world, which would otherwiſe take up all our thoughts, and time, and affections.

[m] Chap. vii. 41, &c. [n] Mr. Malbranch, in his Chriſtian Dialogue.

Was

Was it not for this very reaſon, as was obſerved before, that our Lord made choice of a life of poverty, to convince the *poor*, that they are not ill dealt with; that they are free from a great many temptations, which would hinder them in their way to heaven?

Was it not to convince the *rich*, that they are in the midſt of ſnares and dangers; that they have need of more grace to ſecure them from falling; and that the greateſt ſatisfaction this life can afford them, will not make amends for the loſs of heaven?

People are juſtly offended when they ſee a clergyman ſet his heart upon the world; and they conclude, truly, that ſuch a man *cannot love the Lord with all his heart*. But then they ſhould conſider, that the ſame affection for the world in any other Chriſtian will extinguiſh the love of Chriſt; and that all Chriſtians are equally bound to renounce the love of the world, who deſire to love God as they ſhould do.

In ſhort; it is not for nothing that Jeſus Chriſt has ſaid ſo many ſevere things againſt riches, and the love of the world. It is becauſe he knew how hard it is to be innocent in the midſt of abundance; to enjoy the good things of this world, without loving them too well; and how apt people that have them are, to truſt in them, to forget God, and to ſet their hearts upon them. He has therefore aſſured us, that they are no mark of God's favour;

favour; that people may want them, and be the happier for it; that ſuch as have loſt them may eaſily make up that loſs, by ſecuring a treaſure in heaven; and that this is the uſe which they ought to make of ſuch viſitations of Providence.

I conſider what people will ſay to all this. They will aſk, for inſtance, who is it that does not love the world? It is a queſtion that ought to be anſwered, becauſe the Spirit of God ſays expreſsly, that the love of God and the world are inconſiſtent; and yet we are bound to live in the world, to take care of our families, and not to neglect our buſineſs.

A man therefore may live in the world, and may live like a Chriſtian, provided he avoids all things that are ſinful, or the occaſions of ſin; and that he does not ſet his heart upon what he has or labours for.

Our bleſſed Lord lived in the world, and complied with the laws and cuſtoms of the world; and there was nothing ſingular in his life but his holineſs.

A good man, therefore, will not let the hurry of buſineſs ſo far gain upon him as to make him forget *that this is not the world he was made for*. If the world favours him, he will receive its favours with a fear and jealouſy, leſt he ſhould be corrupted by them; he will not think himſelf one jot the better for theſe outward advantages, nor others the worſe for wanting them; he will deny himſelf

ſelf a great many things, which his circumſtances might furniſh him with; he will be always ready to do good to ſuch as are in miſery; and by a temperance in all things, will be ever prepared patiently to endure what the Providence of God ſhall order for him.

Theſe are all Chriſtian duties; and yet they would not be required of us, if it were not poſſible (by the grace of God) to perform them acceptably in the midſt of worldly buſineſs. And the only fault is, when people forget that they are accountable to God, that they depend upon him, that they are haſtening to another world, and that their hearts ſhould be there. And ſo they content themſelves with ſome bare outward reſpects and teſtimonies of their love to God, with a form of godlineſs, without ever feeling the power thereof; and this they call a love for their Saviour.

IV. We ſhall therefore be obliged to conſider, *what are the true marks of a ſincere love for Jeſus Chriſt?* Let us hear what our Saviour has ſaid in anſwer to this queſtion; *If ye love me, keep my commandments*; and, *He that loveth me not, keepeth not my ſayings.*[o]

Theſe words are ſo plain, that one would think here was no room for a miſtake. What other meaning can they have but this:—That obedience to the laws of the goſpel is the ſureſt ſign of our reſpect for Jeſus Chriſt, and the only condition of favour with God? Upon which

[o] John xiv. 15, 24.

which I cannot but make this juſt obſervation: that the great difficulties of a Chriſtian life lie in this, in mortifying our corrupt affections, in weaning our hearts from the love of the world, and uniting them to Chriſt; not in knowing what our duty requires of us; for this is ſo plain, that *the wayfaring men, though never ſo ſimple, cannot err therein.* Whereas Chriſtians, for the moſt part, contrary to all good ſenſe, ſpend the moſt of their thoughts, and time, and pains, in getting ſtill more knowledge; and look upon the *practice* of Chriſtianity as the eaſieſt thing in the world.

This is a deluſion which is found amongſt all ſorts of Chriſtians. The unlearned excuſe themſelves from a great many duties, on account of their ignorance. And the more learned do very often place religion in being able to ſay a great many things about it; and in the mean while, theſe plain truths are not taken notice of: *That the love of Chriſt is the ſhorteſt way of knowing our duty*; and *that the keeping his commands is the ſureſt teſtimony of our love for him.*

If this were well conſidered, Chriſtians would be more concerned to avoid and to reſiſt temptations; to pray often for grace to do their duty; to examine their hearts and their lives, and to amend where they have done amiſs; and their knowledge would certainly increaſe with their obedience. So ſaith our Saviour: *He that loveth me*; that is, that keepeth

keepeth my commands, *ſhall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifeſt myſelf unto him.*[p]

To conclude, therefore, this particular:—Chriſtians are not to judge of the ſincerity of their love of Chriſt ſo much by the pleaſure they take in knowing his laws, in admiring his goodneſs, in ſpeaking well of his ways, as by the effects theſe produce. If we hate that ſin which coſt him ſo dear: if we learn from his humility, his patience, his ſelf-denial, to imitate him, to ſet our affections on things above; if we read his goſpel with a ſincere deſire to know his will, and with a full purpoſe of heart to keep his ſayings; laſtly, if we find that our love ſtirs us up to an honeſt diſcharge of the duties of our calling, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God; why then we have the witneſs in ourſelves, that our love is ſuch as it ſhould be. But if it does not do this, it is no more than an idle notion.

But how ſhall we poſſeſs our hearts with ſuch a ſincere love? Why; that is what I would ſay in a few words. We muſt know that we want a Saviour; we muſt beg of God to give us an inward feeling of our own miſery; we muſt live up to that meaſure of grace and knowledge which God has given us; we muſt conſider who this Redeemer is, what he has done for us; that he has merited the pardon of our ſins if we repent and forſake them

[p] John xiv. 21.

that

that he is continually interceding for all thoſe that come unto God by him; and that the conſequence of all this will be, (if it is not our own faults) we ſhall be eternally happy.

I do not ſay that all this is to be done without care and pains, and a great deal of trouble. It is a difficult thing to poſſeſs our hearts with a ſincere love of Chriſt; becauſe we muſt firſt renounce all other affections contrary to the love of our Saviour. But then this convinces us of the truth of Chriſtianity, which requires of us ſuch things as no man ever could come up to, unleſs aſſiſted by a divine power. And if an infidel will ſay any thing againſt the Chriſtian Religion, he muſt ſay one of theſe two things; either that there never was any man who lived up to his profeſſion, which would be a bold ſaying indeed; or that God does bleſs and enable thoſe that love and ſerve him, to do his will.

In ſhort, when we conſider who it is that has redeemed us—*no leſs a perſon than the Son of God*;—what it is he requires of us; namely, to avoid ſuch things as would make us for ever miſerable;—what favours he has purchaſed for us; namely, that he has made our peace with God, and has obtained for us a title to eternal happineſs. If we conſider his wonderful condeſcenſion, in taking our nature upon him; in ſubmitting to all the hardſhips of a miſerable life, and a more miſerable death, in order to deliver us from death eternal.

—If, laſtly, we conſider, that we are commanded to *honour the Son even as we honour the Father*; that *whatever we aſk in his name, God will give us*; that our preſent and future welfare depends upon his interceſſion with God for us. Whoever lays theſe things to heart will be convinced, that Jeſus Chriſt has indeed merited our love; that we cannot *think* of him too highly; that we cannot *ſpeak* of him too worthily; that we cannot *worſhip* him too reverently.

How unhappy then are thoſe people, and how careful ſhould all good Chriſtians be not to hearken to them, who would lead us to think, and to ſpeak, and to believe, and to act, as if there were danger of loving their Lord too much, of honouring him too highly, and of ſerving him too religiouſly. Chriſtians ſhould beware of this, leſt they ſhould at laſt be tempted to deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themſelves ſwift deſtruction!

To conclude:—It is no wonder, that there are perſons to whom Jeſus Chriſt and his goſpel are no way acceptable: it cannot poſſibly be otherwiſe. Can a man (for inſtance) who will not ſee his own miſery, think that he has need of help? Can a man of pleaſures love that goſpel which bids him not love his pleaſures upon pain of damnation? Can a man of the world think *that* a wiſe doctrine, which ſo often tells him, that thoſe who truſt

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in riches can hardly go to heaven; and that it is hard to have riches and not to truſt in them? In ſhort; can people heartily embrace a teacher, tho' come from God, who forbids them a thouſand things which they are paſſionately fond of, and which they will have, let what will follow?

And was it not this that made Jeſus Chriſt a ſtumbling-block to both Jews and Gentiles, when he firſt appeared in the fleſh? They came to ſee and hear him with their paſſions about them; and they could ſee nothing in him worth admiring, beſides the wonders that he wrought.

It is juſt ſo with all thoſe at this day, who embrace a Saviour without reſolving to leave their ſins. They may ſpeak of him with reſpect, but it is impoſſible they ſhould love him. They may rejoice with his church for company, but they will have no reaſon for it in the end. For this ſame Jeſus, who came to ſave us, and to deliver us *from the wrath to come*, muſt firſt deliver us *from all iniquity*; *from this preſent evil world*;[q] *from our vain converſation*.[r] If we will not ſuffer him to do this, inſtead of a Saviour, he will be our Judge to condemn us to eternal miſery.

Now, the ſhort of what has been ſaid is this:—Jeſus Chriſt has merited our ſincereſt love. If we deſire to love him ſincerely, we muſt endeavour to do what we believe will

[q] Gal. i. 4. [r] 1 Pet. i. 18.

pleaſe

pleaſe him. We cannot do this, without denying ourſelves in many things which we are very fond of. We ſhall want an eſpecial grace to do this, for of ourſelves we are not able. To this end Jeſus Chriſt has obtained for us this ſignal privilege, that we may call God *Our Father*, a favour which no people ever had before the coming of Chriſt. So that we may go to God with an aſſurance of being heard, as a child goes to his father.

If we make uſe of this privilege, and pray to God in the ſincerity of our ſouls, and a ſenſe of our miſery, he will hear us, and for his Son's ſake, he will juſtify us; will change all our diſpoſitions, and we ſhall love him, and his Son Jeſus Chriſt, as our only good and our portion for ever.

Now, unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. And *may grace be with all them that love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity.*[s] *Amen.*

[s] Eph. vi. 24.

SERMON

SERMON XXV.

THE CHRISTIAN's ARMOUR.

EPHES. vi. 10—19.

Finally, my Brethren, be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the Devil. For we wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to withſtand in the evil day, and having done all, to ſtand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with Truth, and having on the Breaſt-plate of Righteouſneſs; and your feet ſhod with the preparation of the Goſpel of Peace: above all, taking the Shield of Faith, wherewith ye ſhall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: praying always with all prayer and ſupplication in the ſpirit, and watching thereunto with all perſeverance, and ſupplication for all ſaints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the myſtery of the goſpel.[a]

THERE are three things, which are the ruin of too many Chriſtians.

1ſt. A confident preſuming upon their own ſtrength.

[a] See 2 Cor. iii. 5. 1 Pet. v. 1, 9. 1 John v. 4. Epiſtle for the 21ſt Sunday after Trinity.

2dly. An

2*dly*. An utter ignorance of the enemies they have to deal with.

3*dly*. A wilful neglect of the means which God affords them for overcoming thoſe enemies.

Chriſtians have warning of theſe things given them betimes. One of the firſt things they are taught is, that of themſelves they are not able to keep the commandments of God, or to ſerve him without his ſpecial grace. They have at their baptiſm renounced the devil, who is the declared enemy of God and of all good men; and they have been put into poſſeſſion of the means of working out their ſalvation. And yet people periſh, becauſe they will not lay theſe things to heart.

The portion of ſcripture which I have now read to you will be very proper to put you in mind of theſe things. You will ſee, in the firſt place, how neceſſary it is *to diſtruſt ourſelves*, as we hope to be ſafe. Then you will ſee what great reaſon we have to be upon our guard, on account of the enemies we have to deal with. And laſtly; you will ſee what proviſion our gracious God has made for our defence againſt all the aſſaults of our adverſaries. Theſe are matters of great importance, and I pray you will conſider them along with me.

Brethren, (ſaith the apoſtle) *be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*; that is, depend

depend not upon yourſelves, but on God's aſſiſtance, who is mighty to ſave.

Learn, in the firſt place, to diſtruſt yourſelves; acknowledge your own poverty and weakneſs; renounce all pretence to wiſdom and ſelf-government; and remember, that it is much better to be made ſenſible of our own frailty, by giving credit to God's word, (which tells us that of ourſelves we are nothing) than to feel it ſadly, by being permitted, by the juſt judgment of God, to fall into ſome grievous, ſhameful, or deſtructive crime, to convince us of the folly of *depending upon ourſelves*.

In one word; men are naturally *proud*, *ſelf-conceited*, have too good opinion of their own *reaſon*, of their own *reſolutions*, and of their own *ſtrength*; ſo that God is forced to leave them often to themſelves, to make them ſee their error.

Was not this the caſe of St. Peter? Our Lord had told all his diſciples, *Without me ye can do nothing*. St. Peter, forgetful of this, and finding himſelf diſpoſed to ſtand by his maſter even to death, confidently declares, *Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee in any wiſe*. And we all know how this ended.

And be aſſured, good Chriſtians, thus it will be with every man living, who ſhall truſt in himſelf, and not in God alone. *Be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. Get an entire confidence in God, by conſidering his

his power, his wiſdom, and his goodneſs; that he knows all our weakneſs, and our wants; that nothing is impoſſible with God; and that he is ſo infinitely good, that he deſires our happineſs more than we ourſelves do. He had compaſſion upon us, even when we were enemies and ſinners; he has delivered us out of the kingdom and ſlavery of the devil, and put us under the government of his only Son our Lord Chriſt, who governs us by his *laws* and by his *ſpirit*, and will infallibly bring us to heaven, if, denying our own wills and deſires, we depend upon the *goodneſs*, *grace*, and *power*, of God, to defend us againſt our enemies. For, ſaith the text, *we wreſtle not only againſt fleſh and blood*, that is, with men like ourſelves, *but againſt principalities and powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places.*

Theſe are the enemies we have to wreſtle with; namely, againſt the devil and his angels; who, in oppoſition to God, hath ſet up a kingdom in this world; whoſe ſubjects are wicked men and unbelievers, who, by the power of evil ſpirits, are kept in darkneſs, neither ſeeing nor fearing the danger they are in.

In which ſad condition, and ſlavery, we and all mankind had continued to this day, had not the moſt high God ſet up a kingdom and power mightier than that of Satan, even the kingdom of his Son our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who hath called us out of darkneſs unto the

light

light of the goſpel, and who will enable all his faithful ſubjects and ſervants, to reſiſt all the power of the enemy, to avoid his malice, and to overcome his forces. But then we muſt, as the Spirit directs us, *put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to ſtand* [our ground] *againſt all the wiles of the devil*; eſpecially *in the evil day*, that is, in the time of trial and temptation. If then we want our armour, our defence, we ſhall certainly fall before our enemies.

What this armour is, the apoſtle ſets down very particularly in the following verſes. And it behoves every Chriſtian to remember them, and to be provided with them, as he hopes for ſalvation. And they are, *truth*, *faith*, *righteouſness*, *peace*, *hope*, and *prayer*. Theſe are called *the whole Armour of God*; theſe being neceſſary for every Chriſtian who expects to overcome.

You muſt, in the firſt place, *have your loins girt about with Truth*; that is, you muſt be fully perſuaded of the truth of the Chriſtian Religion which you profeſs; remembering, that the goſpel is God's *word* and *will*, given unto us by his own Son, whom we are commanded to hear and obey by a voice from heaven, and who confirmed his goſpel by the greateſt miracles; by which you are inſtructed what you muſt do to inherit eternal life.

It teaches you, for example, that you are to love God above all things, and to ſhew your love

love by keeping his commandments; that you are to love your neighbour as yourſelf; to do good to all; to forgive thoſe that have injured you; to ſpeak evil of no man; nor to defraud or wrong any body.

It teaches you to ſet a true value upon your own ſoul, by aſſuring you, that the whole world ought not to tempt you to loſe it; that ſins of impurity, rioting, and drunkenneſs, will infallibly ſhut you out of heaven; and that ſuch as are meek and humble, and fearful of offending, are in the way of ſalvation.

In ſhort; this is the *Word of Truth*, which a Chriſtian ought to have always about him, as near his heart as the very girdle about his loins. This is the rule by which he is to live, and by which he is to be judged; the very beſt armour he can have againſt errors of all kinds: for having this at hand, he will ſee, that he muſt not be led by the authority or cuſtoms of the world, nor be frightened by its terrors, by its reproaches, or ſcorns; he will ſee what is moſt to be *deſired*, what moſt to be *feared*, what to be *avoided*. In one word; by conſulting this Word of Truth, his heart will be firmly eſtabliſhed againſt all the wiles of the devil, which would lead him to error and deceit.

II. The next defence of a Chriſtian is, *the Breaſtplate of Righteouſneſs*; that is, a conſcientious diſcharge of all the duties of our calling, which, in the day of trial, will ſecure a

Chriſtian

Chriſtian from ſuch aſſaults of Satan as tend to lead him to deſpair.

And indeed an *holy life* is of the ſame uſe to a Chriſtian, that a breaſt-plate is to a ſoldier to keep off blows in the day of battle. *For though all our righteouſneſſes* (as the prophet ſpeaks, Iſaiah lxiv. 4) *are but as filthy rags*, yet having the teſtimony of a ſincere deſire to pleaſe God, God for his Son's ſake accepts of our work and our perſons, and then the enemy is at a loſs what to ſay againſt us.

A Chriſtian will not ſay, I am righteous, and therefore I am ſecure; but he will ſay, I have lived in all good conſcience, I have been ſincere, though I have not been perfect; and Satan himſelf knows, that God, for Chriſt's ſake, will accept of this inſtead of a perfect obedience.

III. The next proviſion which a Chriſtian ought to make for his ſecurity is, *that his feet be ſhod with the preparation of the Goſpel of Peace*; that is, that we walk in the practice of that peaceableneſs and charity recommended in the goſpel, which will make our Chriſtian courſe more ſafe and leſs troubleſome. For *as anger ſtirreth up ſtrife*, and being indulged too long, or too much, will give place or opportunity to the devil to ſtir up adverſaries againſt us; ſo *meekneſs* and *long-ſuffering* will preſerve us from many temptations and perſecutions, as did the ſoldier's ſhoes of braſs de-

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fend them from the caltrops laid in their way to hinder their march.

This is called *the wiſdom which is from above*, that is, from heaven; which teacheth us to be gentle in our behaviour, meek in our words, peaceable in our lives, not *rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwiſe bleſſings.*

Theſe are the arms of a Chriſtian. By theſe he is to overcome the adverſaries of his ſoul, he is *to overcome evil with good; and as much as in him lieth, live peaceably with all men.* By which he will eſcape infinite temptations and dangers.

IV. But *above all the reſt* (ſaith the text) *take the Shield of Faith,*—of faith in the power, wiſdom, and goodneſs of GOD, *wherewith ye ſhall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*; that is, render all the devil's attempts uſeleſs and of no force.

God has not left us to the uncertainty of our own reaſonings, about things which concern our ſouls and eternity; but he has given us his holy Word, and in that has declared, what is truth, what is reaſonable, what is neceſſary to be believed, what to be done, in order to our happineſs. Fix then *this* in your heart, that this is God's word, and that every ſyllable is true and will moſt certainly be made good; and this will defend you as a ſhield, againſt the deluſions of error, againſt the profane arguments of wicked men, againſt the ſnares of your

your own deceitful heart, and againſt the aſſaults of the devil.

For inſtance:—If he ſhall at any time tempt you to *deſpair*, by ſuggeſting how weak you are, and ſubject to ſin, your faith will tell you, (that is, God himſelf tells you) that *his grace is ſufficient*; that he who raiſed Jeſus our Lord from the dead, can raiſe us from the death of ſin unto the life of righteouſneſs.

If he would tempt you to *preſumption*, your faith will tell you, what your Lord and Maſter ſaid to his diſciples:[b] *When ye ſhall have done all thoſe things which are commanded you, ſay, we are unprofitable ſervants, we have done that which was our duty to do.* And, *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.*[c]

If you are tempted to *ſins of impurity*, your faith will tell you plainly, *That no whoremonger, nor unclean perſon, ſhall inherit the kingdom of heaven;*[d] *but ſhall be caſt into outer darkneſs, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

If you are tempted to *fraud*, or *injuſtice*, or *oppreſſion*, your rule will tell you, *That you muſt do violence to no man,*[e] *nor defraud your brother in any matter; becauſe the Lord is the avenger of all ſuch.*[f]

If you are tempted to *covetouſneſs*, you will remember the words and caution of Jeſus Chriſt,[g] *How hardly ſhall they that have riches*

[b] Luke xvii. 10. [c] 1 Cor. x. 12. [d] Eph. v. 5.
[e] Luke iii. 14. [f] 1 Theſſ. iv. 6. [g] Luke xviii. 24.

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enter into the kingdom of heaven. And *What will it profit a man, if he ſhould gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?*[h]

If the devil would tempt you to *drunkenneſs* and *ſenſuality*, you have this plain caution given you, that if you live under the guilt of theſe ſins, Chriſtianity will be of no advantage; for the Chriſtian religion teaches us,[i] *to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſt, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world.*

If you are *poor*, and the devil would tempt you to *diſcontent*, to *envy*, or to *better your condition by unjuſt ways*, remember the words of Jeſus Chriſt:[k] *Bleſſed are ye poor, for your's is the kingdom of heaven. Bleſſed are ye that hunger now, for ye ſhall be filled.* And that poor Lazarus, when he died, was carried by the angels into paradiſe, while the rich man went to hell,[l] there to be tormented. Having food and raiment, be content therewith; for *I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee,*[m] ſaith the Lord Almighty.

Laſtly; if the enemy of your ſoul would *caſt a damp upon your ſpirits*, by ſuggeſting that you cannot pleaſe God by all that you can do; why then ſupport yourſelf by ſuch truths as theſe: that *God is not unrighteous*;[n] that he has given us leave to call him *father*; that a father will not caſt off his children who deſire to pleaſe him, though ſometimes they do what

[h] Mark viii. 36. [i] Tit. ii. 12. [k] Luke vi. 20, 21.
[l] Luke xvi. [m] Heb. xiii. 5. [n] Heb. vi. 10.

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they ſhould not; and, that *he that ſpared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not with him alſo freely give us all things?*[o]

V. To proceed:—The next piece of ſpiritual armour is *the hope of Salvation*, which will ſerve for an helmet or head-piece. And well it may; for what can diſcourage him whoſe hope is in the LORD of hoſts; *who has laid up for them that fight the good fight of faith, an immortal crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

In all our tribulations, therefore, let us, as Moſes had, *have reſpect unto the recompence of reward:*[p] Let us take our bleſſed Lord for an example, *who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of God.*[q]

VI. To theſe we muſt add, *the ſword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*; by which we ſhall be able rightly to judge betwixt good and evil, and defend ourſelves againſt the ſtratagems of the devil, as our Lord did in the wilderneſs, who, when he was tempted of Satan, ſtill ſilenced him with a ſentence of ſcripture, which the tempter flew from as a coward would from the ſword of a conqueror.

Laſtly. To all theſe we muſt add, *prayer, ſupplication*, and perſeverance in theſe; by which we ſhall be able either to prevent or remove all the evils we are ſubject to, or have the grace to bear them with ſatisfaction or patience.

[o] Rom. viii. 32. [p] Heb. xi. 26. [q] Heb. xii. 2.

All the fore-mentioned graces are the gift of God; from *him* we muſt aſk them, and from *him* we muſt receive them, if ever we have them. But then we muſt learn to aſk them with the *humility* of creatures that know their wants, with the *reverence* of people who know their diſtance, and with the *earneſtneſs* of Chriſtians who know they are undone unleſs their petitions are granted.

And whoever with theſe diſpoſitions lays his wants before God, lamenting his own miſeries, and earneſtly begging the graces of God's Holy Spirit to ſupport him in his Chriſtian warfare, ſhall certainly find the good effect of his prayers. For, ſaith our Lord Chriſt,[r] *if ye, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children; how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit* (and in that all good things) *to them that aſk him?*

And now, good Chriſtians, having explained to you a portion of Scripture, which ought to be very well underſtood and remembered, I would deſire you to conſider, whether you can imagine, that Chriſtianity is an idle ſtate of life, or that any man can hope to get to heaven without *concern*, and *care*, and *pains*, and *ſtriving*, without taking the armour which God has provided for our ſecurity?

You ſee what enemies you have to deal with:—*ſatan*, a very malicious and powerful ſpirit; the *world*, a very deceitful bewitching

[r] Luke xi. 13.

adverſary;

adverſary; and laſtly, an *heart* deſperately corrupt and wicked.

Verily, if our gracious God had not pitied our condition, and had not provided us with ſuitable ſecurity againſt ſuch enemies, not one man living could have been ſaved. Shall we then, becauſe God has been careful of us, be careleſs of ourſelves? Shall we live as if there were no danger, becauſe God has provided us with arms to oppoſe our enemies?

Believe it, good Chriſtians, it is not for nothing that the apoſtle exhorts us *to work out our own ſalvation with fear and trembling*.

Whoever would continue Chriſt's faithful ſoldier and ſervant unto his life's end, and inherit eternal life after death, muſt *watch*, and *pray*, and *believe*, and *hope*, and *ſtrive*, and *patiently endure* hardſhips, or his Chriſtian profeſſion will ſignify very little to him at the laſt.

It is not ſufficient *to renounce the devil and all his works*, to profeſs to believe in God, and to promiſe to ſerve him all our days, unleſs in good earneſt we do ſo, and become Chriſtians in deed as well as in name, with which too many, God knows, content themſelves.

Let me therefore ſet before you the *character of a true Chriſtian*—one who is in the way of ſalvation, that every one of us may ſee how far we come ſhort of it, that we may amend what is amiſs in us.

A *true Chriſtian* then is one whom the Spirit of God has awakened into *a deep ſenſe of his*

own miſery;—who can have no reſt, until he knows *what he muſt do to be ſaved*;—and being convinced that he muſt paſs through a corrupt world, infinite errors, and powerful enemies, in his way to heaven, his heart is filled with a godly fear, and diſtruſt of himſelf, (knowing, by ſad experience, his own weakneſs) till at laſt he finds he muſt periſh, unleſs God aſſiſts him with the means of overcoming his enemies. He ſets himſelf therefore in good earneſt *to know the will of God*; that is, by what means God will enable a poor, weak, ſinful creature to get the better of ſo many adverſaries, which he is ſure to meet with in his way to happineſs. And having learned that the goſpel is the rule by which we muſt live, becauſe by it we muſt be judged, that a firm faith in the power of God for overcoming of all difficulties, that a lively hope in his promiſes, that a ſincere endeavour after righteouſneſs, and a peaceable behaviour towards all men; that theſe are the means which God has ordained for our ſafety; he therefore labours with all his might, *to put his whole confidence in God*, never preſuming upon his own ſtrength; to have always in his eye the prize of his high calling; to order his life according to the rules of the goſpel; and, as much as may be, to be at peace with all his fellow-travellers.

Theſe are a *Chriſtian's Defence*; with theſe he conquers his enemies, and with theſe he grows

grows every day *ſtronger in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

But then, to preſerve and to increaſe his faith and other graces, he diligently reads or hears God's word, (for faith comes by hearing;) he earneſtly prays God to increaſe his faith, his hope, and his charity; he keeps a careful watch (like a good ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt) over his appetites and paſſions, that Satan may not get an advantage over him; and by theſe means, and the aids of God's Spirit, he is ſecure from fear of evil.

And be aſſured, good Chriſtians, that it is well worth your while to be at this pains, whether you conſider the happineſs you ſhall attain, or the miſeries you ſhall eſcape.

Heaven and *hell* are words in every body's mouth, while few lay to heart what is meant by the one or the other. But one or the other of theſe two muſt be the portion of every man; ſo that it mightily concerns every man to look to it, leſt that be his portion which he leaſt thinks of.

Now, God having mercifully furniſhed us with means of ſecuring us againſt the worſt that can happen, our duty and intereſt is, to make uſe of thoſe means with the ſerioufneſs of people that hope to be ſaved, with the concern of people that ſee their danger among ſo many temptations, with the cheerfulneſs of people who hope for eternal happineſs, and laſtly,

laſtly, with the courage of Chriſtians who have the Almighty for their helper.

By this, good Chriſtians, we may, any of us, make a judgment of ourſelves, whether we are in the way of ſalvation or not. If in truth we are, why then the care of our ſouls will take up much of our thoughts, and put us upon ways, and reſolutions, and contrivances, for doing what we know is neceſſary for our eternal welfare. If, on the other hand, our hearts are full of the world, and all our thoughts and endeavours tend that way, why then depend upon it we are not in the way of life, and we ought not to be eaſy under ſuch circumſtances.

And ſince we are encompaſſed on every ſide with dangers, and expoſed to temptations both from within and from without, let us not depend on our own ſtrength, but beg continually of God to keep us reſolute and conſtant to the vows that are upon us: and then God will increaſe our *faith*, our *hope*, our *confidence*, and all other graces, which are neceſſary to bring us to heaven; whither the good Lord bring us all, through Jeſus Chriſt.

To whom, &c.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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